

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1157.—VOL. XLV.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 4, 1885.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[HYACINTH SANK UPON THE COLD GROUND, HER FAIR HEAD PILLOWED ON THE OLD MILESTONE.]

CAN YOU BLAME HER?

—20—

PROLOGUE.

A gloomy day in November; such a morning as can only be seen in England. The sky looked one uniform sheet of leaden grey, underlined by a single streak of blue. There was no rain, but a certain thickness of the atmosphere; not amounting to a fog, but sufficient to give a cold, wet sensation to such parts of one's anatomy as were exposed to it; a cold, sharp wind, mud in the streets, and a kind of greasy dampness on the pavement—the kind of day under which one cannot extol the English climate, when the spirits insensibly descend a peg or two, and an indescribable depression seems wafted about in the air.

So much for the atmosphere. The time was ten o'clock; the scene, Victoria Station; the actor, a young man of handsome, soldierly mien and clearly cut, regular features, who walked up and down the platform with measured, steady tread, which contrasted

strongly with the eagerness shining in his blue eyes, and the strange, expectant expression stamped upon his mouth.

"The train is late?" he said, to a porter.

"She mostly is, sir! She's signalled now, though, so she won't be many minutes."

No, not many—four at the most; and the train steamed slowly into the platform.

The young man scanned each carriage eagerly as it passed him, then his face brightened.

He had seen the object of his search; another moment and she stood by his side on the platform, a slight, girlish-looking creature, of whom one noticed chiefly that she was very nervous, and that some strange fear had not altogether left her.

"I knew you would come."

There was a lover's fond confidence in the tone.

He spoke so fondly, so proudly, it was easy to guess the relationship he bore to the fair girl who leant upon his arm.

If ever man's voice sounded full of tenderness and affection, Maxwell Stuart's so sounded on this dull November morning.

"I could not stay away. Oh! Max, is it very wrong? I felt so frightened!"

"How can it be wrong, sweetheart?" he answered her. "We love each other, and, therefore, it must be right to wish to spend our lives together."

"But —"

"Don't think of scruples!" he said, with just a touch of authority in his manner. "Just remember you are free, and we are to be happy. Don't let anything else trouble you, my darling!"

She smiled into his face; she had implicit confidence in him. To her he seemed infallible.

"Where are you taking me?"

"To have some breakfast. I don't want you to be quite famished, and I expect you have had nothing yet."

He took her into one of those restaurants which are always to be found in plenty near a large railway station.

The breakfast he ordered was of a *recherché* order, but it was thrown away upon his companion.

She drank a cup of coffee, but the eatables



seemed to choke her, and so she gave up the attempt to swallow them, and thus the repast took very few minutes.

Max looked at his watch.

"Are you tired, child?"

"Oh, no."

"I was thinking we might as well walk. I told them eleven o'clock, and if we ride we shall be there too soon."

"I had rather walk. Oh! Max," as they passed into the street, "doesn't it seem wonderful that I should be alone in London with you?"

"Marvellous! Oh! child! how often we have looked forward to this day in all this weary time of waiting!"

She looked at him in surprise.

"You speak as if we had never engaged for years and years. You forget, sir, that three months ago you had never even seen me—never even heard the sound of my name."

"Do you think I have forgotten it? I can see the place still—the chestnut avenue, and you a slim, white-robed girl standing before me, half afraid to tell me that I was trespassing. Sweetheart, I never forget that picture! It will linger here in my heart. It was my first meeting with my first love!"

She raised her beautiful dark eyes and fixed them full upon his face.

"I read in an old book, Max, that there was no true love without pain; perhaps all the difficulties that have troubled us have been trials just to prove the depth of our love!"

"Perhaps. Dear, I shall never forget what you are sacrificing for me!"

But there was a sadness in his tone that went to the girl's heart.

"Something troubles you, Max. Won't you tell me what it is? Oh! my dear one, can't my love make you happy ever now?"

"Happier than Lever thought to be! Yet you are right, my darling, I have a trouble."

"Tell it me?"

"Not yet," he answered. "I cannot bear to shadow your cheerfulness to-day."

She looked into his eyes.

"Is it that you have taken back your love, that you regret asking me to share your life?"

He smiled.

"Sweetheart, put such thoughts aside. I shall never regret loving you. Mine may be a selfish passion, since it has caused you many sorrows, but it is at least sincere."

"I can bear anything else."

"Anything?"

"Anything in the world, so that I have your love!"

"My love shall never fail you, sweetheart."

They had been walking all this time down those long, straight streets which form the district its foes call Pimlico, and its admirers South Belgravia. They stood at last before a large imposing-looking church—no gloomy, timeworn edifice, closed from Sunday to Sunday, with a smell of mildew and damp, but a bright, modern building, whose doors were open from dawn till dusk, and which on Sundays was packed with a congregation of the very poor, drawn from the surrounding slums.

A church doing a vast work, but one almost unknown beyond the immediate neighbourhood—a church utterly ignored by the aristocracy, whose most fashionable attendants were small retail shopkeepers, no doubt.

Max Stuart had some good reason for choosing it, but, at the same time, it seemed to the uninitiated a peculiar selection.

The large building was empty save for the verger and two strangers who were in a remote pew trying to decipher the inscription in one of the memorial windows. The girl clung to Maxwell's arm.

"I feel so frightened."

"Courage!"

A respectably dressed woman—perhaps the verger's wife—emerged from some hiding-place, and a white-robed clergyman issued from the vestry. He looked a little disturbed at the appearance of the two principal actors

in the coming ceremony. He next addressed one or two searching questions to Maxwell, but the latter answered promptly, and showed a magic piece of paper conveying his Grace of Canterbury's special permit for his happiness to be cemented. Clearly the clergyman had no choice but to perform the ceremony.

He performed it beautifully. Had the church been crowded with spectators—had the bride been in satin and Brussels lace, and her attendants a train of high-bred damsels—he could not have given more effect to the beautiful solemn service.

Maxwell's voice rang out full and clear, the girl's trembled slightly. At last all was over, the solemn injunction spoken, "Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder," and the wedded pair stood in the vestry signing their names in the register.

The curate turned to the new-made wife.—"You must let me wish you all happiness! This is a strange, lonely wedding for you!"

"Thank you," she returned, simply. "I don't feel lonely. You know, we love each other."

As the two walked down the aisle, the strangers, who had been studying the painted window, and had remained from curiosity to hear the wedding, turned, and came face to face with Maxwell and his wife. Neither bridegroom nor bride noticed them. They little recked the effect that chance meeting was to have on one of their lives.

"A stolen marriage!" said the elder of the two. "Poor little thing, how frightened she looks—a mere child!"

"A child now, but with the makings of a lovely woman!" said his companion. "I should like to see her three years hence. She will be one of the beauties of London."

"Nonsense!"

Meanwhile the two thus dismissed passed out into the busy street. The sky was still leaden-coloured, the air still raw and damp, the pavement slippery with greenness, but they heeded none of these things; to them the world just now meant each other. They had room for no other thought.

They said nothing; perhaps both their hearts were too full for speech. They walked back to Victoria; a small, black bag and a portmanteau were rescued from the cloak-room, and removed with their owners to a hansom cab. Max gave the order, "Liverpool Street Station," and they were off.

Only then when their future seemed, as it were, begun, the girl-wife slipped her hand into her husband's, and asked, quietly,—

"Where are we going?"

"St. Edmund's."

"St. Edmund's! Where is it?"

"In Norfolk. It is a quiet little watering-place on the German Ocean."

Certainly, it seemed the maddest thing to go to a village on the German Ocean in winter. Perhaps the bride's eyes seemed to express astonishment, for her husband smiled.

"What do you think made me choose St. Edmund's?"

"I haven't an idea."

"I read somewhere in a guide-book that it was almost deserted from October to March."

She smiled. The same thought was in both their hearts. No place could be too deserted, too quiet for them, since they dreaded, for a reason of their own, beyond aught else, a meeting with friend or foe.

A lavish use of a silver key secured them the undisturbed occupation of a carriage. They had *Punch* and the evening papers, but neither of them glanced at them.

Maxwell leant back in a corner, with his wife's head upon his shoulder and a look of indescribable content in his brown eyes. The girl-wife seemed unconscious of fear now or weariness. She had her hero, and she was content.

The short autumn day was closing in when the train reached St. Edmund's. Mrs. Stuart noticed with surprise there were no other passengers.

It was a single line from Lynn. At St. Edmund's the rain was falling heavily, and the air was intensely cold. She shivered in spite of herself.

A porter, the only retainer of the railway company at that moment in St. Edmund's, came up, and gazed askance at the pair.

"Are there any apartments to be let?" asked Maxwell of the sleepy official.

"Bless you, yes, sir!—fifty in one street! All the hotels are empty. We don't do no business in the winter. I reckon you might might have every bedroom at the Golden Ram, and not pay a high price neither."

It was a wretched night. The hotel was close. Apartments, even if plentiful, would involve a journey. Maxwell changed his mind, and directed the luggage to be carried across to the Golden Ram.

The landlady justified the porter's assertion. She placed three charming rooms at Max Stuart's disposal for a very moderate charge, a neat chambermaid came up with hot water and candles, a pleasant air of welcome pervaded their whole reception, and when they sat down to tea the blazing fire, the delicious country butter, and cold fowls would have impressed in favour of the Golden Ram visitors far more critical than Maxwell or his wife.

Tea was over, the tray removed, and the girl had taken a low stool at her husband's feet.

Max raised her tenderly, drew her down to rest on his knee, kissed the fair face again and again, but made no attempt to speak.

Perhaps the young bride grew uneasy at his silence, perhaps there was something in the solemnity of that embrace which troubled her. She said, quietly,—

"Max."

"My darling!"

"Why don't you speak to me, Max? You look grave and stern. What is it?"

"Not stern, child; sorry."

"What is it?"

He sighed heavily.

"You promised to tell me later on," she urged.

But he seemed in no mood to redeem his promise. He held his wife stammered to his heart in a passionate embrace, but he made no attempt to answer her question.

"Tell me," she pleaded; "surely I have a right now to share your sorrows, Max?"

"I can't bear to. Child, I have been selfish. I ought not to have let you sacrifice yourself to me."

"Sacrifices!" and there was a pretty air of indignation in her manner. "I call it no sacrifice to promise to spend my life with you when I love you better than the world."

"I had bad news this morning, sweetheart. The letter was put into my hands as I was starting."

She shivered.

"It did not keep you from me," she whispered. "I can bear anything but that."

He paused. One hand toyed with her bright hair; then he asked, gently,—

"Do you ever read the papers, child?"

She shook her head with a smile.

"Fancy my being allowed to look at a newspaper! Why, Max, I have only been promoted to Scott's novels lately."

He sighed. Her innocence, her utter unconsciousness of the blow made his task all the harder.

"There has been a war raging for some time in Africa, darling," he began, slowly, "and fresh troops are sent out at intervals. I heard this morning—"

She interrupted him. Flinging her arms around his neck, she cried,—

"Not you, Max! Oh, my love, not you! Darling, tell me it is a cruel mistake, and I am not to lose you!"

He would not deceive her.

"Bear it bravely, sweetheart. The 425th are under orders for Africa. We sail next week."

She said nothing. He wished she had

broken out into lamentations, even into sobs. She just gave one little sigh, and then nestled more closely in his arms, as though her embrace would hold him back.

"I told you I had been selfish," said the soldier, fondly. "When I had the letter I ought to have told you at once, and sent you home. I ought never to have brought such a trial on your youth."

"Was it not already there?" she murmured. "Losing you, would it have been easier to let you go and not have the best right of all to sorrow for your absence?"

"You are so young, so beautiful," he said, fondly. "It seems cruel to have brought you to such a fate. Months of absence and suspense—perhaps widowhood at last."

She clung to him with a pleading cry.

"Take me with you, Max."

"My darling, I cannot!"

"I would give no trouble," she urged. "I would bear all hardships bravely. Oh, Max, take me with you!"

"I wish I could!"

It was spoken passionately—lingeringly. He loved this fair girl with an affection which knew no limits.

He was conscious of the trials that awaited her in his absence; he dreaded to think of the storm that might break over her bright head when he was far away; but how could he take her to Africa when absolutely no ladies of the 42nd were going to accompany the regiment? How could he make provision for her when he was only a captain, with nothing in the world but his pay?

They might have managed but for this cruel order abroad. They had planned it all. Life had seemed sweet to them; even in barracks, if spent together; but now that was over. They must part, and the wife must go home and hide as something away the secret of that day's work.

How he told her this, how he reasoned with her, and showed her the hopelessness of the case, we need not dwell on. He convinced her.

"And when do you go?"

"Next Thursday. We will stay together till then. It isn't long; is it, sweetheart? Seven days of happiness—one week of married life, and then separation! But you will be brave!"

"I will be brave! Max, I'm glad you didn't tell me, and that we are married! I'd rather belong to you, my darling, even though we must be parted. At least I am your own—at least I have a right to love you, and be near you."

That week went by too swiftly for our hapless lovers; the hours sped away too fast; that dull seaside village seemed a paradise to Max. He and his wife used to wander along the sands, and watch the coming tide.

It wrung their hearts to think how, in a few days, that cruel sea would roll between them. Both grieved—only the girl grieved most. It is always easier to leave than to be left.

Max was a gallant soldier. He came of a long race of warriors; he loved his profession dearly. It hurt him sadly to part from his wife; but he had now scenes and stirring duties to look forward to. His future would be full of interest; hers was blank. To her the world meant love—just love, and nought beside.

"Will you write to me, Max?" she asked him when the last night had come, and the two were sitting side by side in their little sitting-room at the Golden Ram.

"How can I? Your people would intercept all letters. No, sweetheart; I see no chance of our having news of each other."

But love lent the girl skill to devise a plan.

"You must write, Max," she said, simply. "I think it will kill me if I have no news. I am a good walker. Direct your letters to some distant place, and I will call for them."

"But if it is discovered?"

"It won't be. There is a post-office at

Athenstone, four miles across country from us. No one there knows me by sight. Write there."

"To what name?"

"Miss Brown. Oh, Max! how hard it seems! Why can't we be open, and write to each other like other husbands and wives? Why must this miserable scheming and concealment go on?"

"Because I am poor."

"I don't mind poverty."

"No, but your people would. If I went to them they wouldn't ask whether I loved you. They would inquire if I would keep a town-house for you, an opera-box, a carriage and pair; they would ask if I could give you jewels, rare lace, and silken gowns; and, if I said 'No,' they would tell me I was no fit match for you, and send me to the right-about."

"They don't love me," she whispered, "and you do, so why should they want to keep me?"

"Because they are votaries of fashion."

"Is it wrong to be fashionable, Max?"

"Not if it doesn't crush out every natural affection within your heart. They don't think of you as a girl with a warm heart and tender feelings, dear—they think of you as something they are bound to dispose of to the best advantage. A landed country gentleman, a baronet, or a peer's eldest son, such would be a seeming partner for you; not a penniless soldier with only his sword to carve his fortune."

"Max, don't speak so bitterly."

"I can't help it. I was brought up to wealth, to think myself the heir of a title and vast fortune; then five years ago my uncle married his housekeeper, and now three children stand between me and my inheritance."

"It doesn't matter," she said, simply.

"Doesn't matter!"

"I couldn't love you more, dear," she whispered, "not even if you were a duke, and when this war is over you will come back to me, sweet, and we shall be happy."

"Heaven grant it!"

"And I shall work so hard, and try to learn all sorts of things while you are away, that I may be a good little wife when you come back."

"And you will write to me?"

"By every mail—it will be my one great pleasure."

Max folded her to his heart. After a pause he began slowly, as one a little doubtful of his own words,—

"Sweetheart, I want to talk to you. I hope, I trust I shall be home before next year is out—home to claim my wife, and make the best home for her I can; but if I am detained abroad—"

He broke off abruptly. It was difficult to put the thought in his head into words.

"I will wait, Max. However long it is you will find me in the old home waiting."

He kissed her, and went on,—

"We can never quite see how things turn out, my wife. It might be that, despite all our care, your family discovered the fact of our marriage."

She trembled.

"How could they? We have told no one."

"I may they might discover it. In that case, childie, you would have many cruel words to listen to, and it might be that you would have to leave home."

"Leave home alone!"

"I hope not, I trust not. I am only thinking of dim possibilities, my own. If this were so you would need money. I want to feel you are provided for in case of any unforeseen trouble."

He was putting a purse into her hand—she tried to push it back.

"You said you were poor, Max, and I never need money. I hardly spend two shillings from one year's end to another."

"You must take it, dear. I wrote to my uncle directly I knew I must go to Africa, and he sent me a hundred pounds as a parting pre-

sent. I have put half of it for you, and you will make me very anxious if you refuse it."

"But, Max, what should I do with so much money?"

He smiled.

"For one thing you will want stamps—foreign postage is expensive. Oh, you will find plenty to do with it, never fear."

"But if anyone finds it out?"

"No one must do so. What are you going to do with this?" and he touched the golden circlet on her finger. "You know after to-morrow you must not wear it."

She took a small leather case from her pocket. On one side was his photograph, the other was a kind of loose leather pocket for letters or such things. The case shut with a spring, the secret of which was known only to the owner. Max knew the trifle well; indeed, it had been a present from himself.

"That will be first-rate." He folded the bank-notes so that they fitted into the pocket, covered them with a piece of paper, and then slipped three sovereigns into the purse. "You will be able to use this without any suspicion, and I am not afraid of your losing the notes. I fancy you will take care of the case because it contains my photograph."

"Max."

"What is it, sweetheart?"

"I want to know why you love me?"

He smiled.

"I couldn't help it."

"I am not pretty—at least no one but you thinks so, and I am terribly stupid."

Her husband looked tenderly into her dark eyes.

"I cannot tell you the why or wherefore, dear. I only know that from the moment I saw your face I made up my mind that, Heaven willing, you should one day be my wife."

"You have not had to wait so very long," she said, a pretty reproof in her tone.

"Remember, sir, please, it is only three months since we met."

"Only three months! But you see, sweetheart, a great deal happens in three months."

The next day they left St. Edmund's, and travelled together to London; then they parted, the man took the train to Southampton, the girl vanished—we know not where.

Think of it, you who mourn over a short parting when you have loving friends to soothe your grief, the certainty of a tender correspondence, adieu in the shelter of home, with no one to intrude upon your grief; you who have sorrowed over partings in such favourable circumstances, spare a pang of pity for the girl who took her last look at her husband in a crowded London terminus, with no chance of last words, no opportunity for a caress. He stood on the platform, watching the train prepare to start, one hand across the door of the carriage, his eyes fixed on her in tenderest love. The whistle sounded, the bell rang; another moment, and it would be too late to bend forward.

"Courage, sweetheart," he murmured, tossing into her lap a bunch of sweet violets which he had just bought of an itinerant seller, and then the engine bore his wife swiftly from his sight—his wife, who must not even bear his name or wear his wedding-ring; the poor young girl who would have no one to say a word of sympathy, to give a look of pity in her terrible grief.

She leaned back in her corner, the violets clasped in her hand.

"Shall I ever see him again?" she murmured. "Oh! my darling, fate has been very cruel to us that we should have met to part like this."

She had never read Burns's poetry, or only a verse of the Scottish bard must have occurred to her as describing the anguish which tore her heart.

"Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met and never parted,
We had ne'er been brokenhearted."

CHAPTER I.

SOMEWHERE in the loveliest of English counties, within twenty miles of London, and yet as much in the country as though it had been six times further from the great metropolis, there stands a sleepy, little village which nestles at the Kentish Hills, and rejoices in the quaint name of Red Cross.

The origin of the name I never heard. The village itself is one of the prettiest of its size in England.

In the year we write of, when the Zulu War was at its height, there was no railway-station within three miles, also there were no semi-detached villas or small houses—just a few picturesque cottages, covered with climbing roses, and some scattered mansions, shut in their own spacious grounds from the too curious eyes of the passer-by.

Of these the largest and most important was Normanhurst, a beautiful old manor-house, for centuries the home of the Earls of Norman.

They were a grand old race, but of late fortune had dealt unkindly by them; bad luck had attended their speculations. One had lost thousands on the turf, his son had dabbled in mining speculations, and been well-nigh ruined, so that the present Earl had succeeded to a very embarrassed property.

He married for love, and his wife died within the year, leaving him with one only child, a daughter.

After that he grew reckless. For fifteen years he led a wild, roaming life, getting deeper and deeper into difficulties, until he took it into his head to choose a second wife, a lady of common sense and discretion, who did more in twelve months to arrange his affairs respectably than his lawyers had done in twelve years. She was a clever, managing woman; she loved her husband passionately, but she well-nigh hated his only child.

Lord Norman had never been an indulgent father; he had been careless and neglectful, never arbitray or unkind. Under his wife's rule he became both; the freedom in which Lady Hyacinth Dane had lived was restrained, until at last she was kept in as complete subjection as though she had been a little child.

There was no one to love her, no one to take care of her, the girl was simply alone in the world; her father never interfered to protect her, and the new Countess worked her own will.

One thing was in Lady Hyacinth's favour—the governess who had been with her from childhood was allowed to remain. Lord and Lady Norman were constantly from home, and as a chaperone was really needful, perhaps Miss Johnson was cheaper than a stranger; perhaps she contrived to conciliate her own powers; anyway, she was allowed to keep her position at Red Cross, and she was kind and gentle to Lady Hyacinth, who really liked the quiet, harmless spinster, although she had never been able to give her a warmer affection. They sat together one bright February morning in the pretty room where Lady Hyacinth pursued her studies. She was not pursuing them now; she sat in a low chair by the fireside, looking so tired and ill, it was no wonder Miss Johnson's anxiety was excited.

"You overwalked yourself yesterday," she said, kindly; "why will you take such long expeditions?"

"They do me good."

Miss Johnson threw up her hands.

"You came home looking like a ghost, you were so feverish last night I thought of sending for the doctor, and now you are so tired you cannot even study."

"Miss Johnson, what is the good of study?"

The governess turned on her pupil with a look of outraged horror; most decidedly the workhouse officials were never more enraged at Oliver Twist's daring to ask for more than Miss Johnson at Lady Hyacinth's question.

"You study to be wise and clever," she

returned; "to know the accomplishments suited to a lady."

"I don't want to be wise or clever," retorted Lady Hyacinth, bitterly; "I want to be happy."

Miss Johnson stood aghast. Of happiness, poor woman, she had had little share; she might have discoursed on wisdom, knowledge, experience, but on the subject of happiness she was absolutely mute.

"I want to be happy," repeated Lady Hyacinth. "I am nearly eighteen; I ought to have done with lessons, and to have a taste of home life."

"Normanurst is your home, Lady Hyacinth."

"And I hate it! I have lived here all my life, Miss Johnson, but I hate Normanhurst."

"Not all your life," corrected the governess; "there was that week when you went to your cousin's. You remember, Lady Hyacinth, your mother was ill, and I longed to go to her and yet dared not leave you."

"I remember."

"I think," said the governess, hesitatingly, "it would be as well not to mention that episode to the Countess; she does not like your cousin, Lady Hyacinth, she might be angry."

"I shall not tell her."

"And the servants?"

"Lady Norman is no favourite with them. Miss Johnson, don't you wonder what papa could see in my stepmother to make him marry her?"

Miss Johnson would not commit herself.

"Lady Norman is very clever."

"Is she? Then I think I'm glad I'm stupid. We were much happier as we were before, Miss Johnson. Papa was never so ambitious and fond of money as he is now."

Poor Miss Johnson! She agreed most heartily, only she dared not say so.

"Have you any idea when the Earl and Countess are coming home?"

"None at all."

"I wonder if I ought to write to Lady Norman and tell her how anxious I feel about you?"

"Oh, no!" the girl clung to her almost passionately. "Dear, dear Miss Johnson, promise me not; she would come down here—and I can't bear the thought of her questions."

"Then try to recover your spirits. Do you know, Hyacinth, you are terribly altered. I think sometimes this life is too quiet for you."

"Oh, no! I like it."

"My dear child, you said just now you hated it?"

"Ah! but I could not stand a London season. Miss Johnson, when I leave here it will be to be presented."

"And do you not look forward to it?"

"Look forward to it, aye, with horror."

"My dear, you must not speak so."

"How can I help it? You know my step-mother, Miss Johnson; she will have but one aim, to find me a rich husband."

"You might love him," suggested the spinster.

"Never."

She was barely eighteen, this girl who uttered her sentiments so decidedly—barely eighteen, and with promise of great beauty. As yet she was simply a creature of smiles and tears, with bright chestnut-tinted hair, and the loveliest, tenderest violet eyes. Her complexion was a fine colourless creamy tint, which contrasted well with her black eye-lashes; her features were regular and had a stamp of aristocracy, but her whole face was too quiet, too full of sadness.

She lacked life. Life and animation would have increased her attractions fourfold. She was an earl's only child; but she wore a plain serge dress and no ornaments, save a tiny gold brooch in her collar.

Her figure was very slight, and she was above the middle height; for the rest she looked as though her thoughts were far away,

and the immediate surroundings had no interest for her.

"I think I shall go out."

"My dear!" cried the governess, "when you can hardly stand you had much better go to bed."

Hyacinth looked into Miss Johnson's face with eyes that would have melted a heart of stone.

"Let me go, I feel so tired, and the fresh air will do me good. My eyes are hot; they seem as if they were burning up the rest of my face. Dear Miss Johnson, let me go for a long walk; indeed, it will do me good."

"But why do you want to go?"

"I don't know; I think I have a restless fit on me. It looks so lovely out, this clear frosty day."

Miss Johnson yielded. She had yielded to most of Hyacinth's wishes since she was confided to her care ten years before.

"You must wrap yourself up well, remember. Lady Hyacinth, shall I come with you. My cold is very bad; but if you think you will be dull—"

"I am never dull out-of-doors, and you wouldn't be able to walk half the way I mean to go."

"You will be back early, Hyacinth?"

"It is not dusk till half-past five. I promise you to be back by then. I shall start directly after lunch."

And she carried out her intention. The clocks had not chimed two when Lady Hyacinth passed through the lodge gates.

"It'll be a rare rough night, my lady. John says there's snow in the air," said the lodge-keeper's wife, a pleasant, buxom woman, who had known the girl from babyhood.

"Oh, I shall be back long before dark."

"You're going into town, maybe, my lady, to do a little shopping?"

"Perhaps."

But she did not take the road to the town; she turned to the wide common, selected one of the narrow footpaths across it, and was soon hidden from view by the tall bushes of gorse which rose up like sentinels on either side.

The gorse scratched her face, and tore her clothes; but Hyacinth noted little, her mind was too full of other thoughts.

"I could not have stayed away," she murmured. "Oh, what shall I do when papa and Lady Norman are here? It is hard enough now."

Hard enough! Aye, that long tiring walk on the bleak February afternoon was hard, but hope buoyed up the girl's sinking heart, hope led her on.

"Only a little way more and I shall be there; only half-an-hour, and I shall have it."

She only spoke of her expected treasure as "it"; but the very tone of her voice told that to her it was priceless, that what she sought was worth braving any perils to secure.

She met few people; the afternoon was not one to lure the wary from home, to the weatherwise snow was in the air. That dull, grey sky looked full of it, and to be caught on Red Cross Common in a snowstorm was no light calamity.

But Hyacinth gave no thought to the weather. She sped on with steps which owed their fleetness to anxiety, not to strength. At last she reached her goal, a little sleepy village, smaller and duller even than Red Cross. She walked up the narrow, irregular street until she came to the solitary shop, a window in which sugar sticks, boot-laces, candles, and spelling-books were displayed in pleasing variety.

None of these wares seemed likely to benefit Lady Hyacinth, and yet she pressed open the rickety door with an eagerness which lent a faint, pink bloom to her delicate skin, and for a moment she could not command her voice sufficiently to speak to the old woman who stood behind the counter.

At last she asked her question. The old nurse put on her spectacles and went to a drawer at a little distance. She turned over

its contents with provoking slowness; and, after keeping the girl full five minutes in suspense, came back with the answer,—

"No, miss."

Hyacinth's face fell.

"You are quite sure?"

From another questioner the woman might have resented this half doubt of her accuracy, but Hyacinth's face was too wistful for her to give offence.

"Quite, my dear," said the woman, with a strange touch of pity in her voice. "Keep your heart up; maybe it'll be here next week, and I'll take right good care of it when it does come, you may be sure."

Hyacinth turned back into the rawness of the February afternoon.

It was later than she thought, or maybe hope had so buoyed her up she had not taken thought of the flight of time; now her hope was over she realised that it was four o'clock. She was five miles from home, and, oh! so heart sick and weary. A strange feeling came to Hyacinth; it would be well for her if she could lie down and die there in the open country, she was so tired.

"I must have courage, this waiting can't last for ever; my happiness will come back, and then I shall laugh over these troubles."

But she was very far from laughing now. The sky had clouded over, and a few flakes of snow began to fall; these were followed by others larger and more numerous. In ten minutes the ground was covered with a white mantle, and Hyacinth realised sadly the lodge woman's prophecy was fulfilled—the snow had come.

On she went, with aching heart and trembling limbs. No mistake about the snow now. Hyacinth's jacket was covered; it came thick and fast upon her face, almost blinding her. Little wonder that in such a storm she missed the pathway across the common, and, instead of taking the one to Red Cross, turned in an opposite direction.

The darkness came on apace, she could not see the way. She walked on and on mechanically, always trusting to come to some familiar landmark, as Red Cross Church, or even the milestones which recorded the distance from London. At last, weary and foot-sore, she emerged from the winding path to find herself in a broad road bordering the common, but it was quite strange to her; she felt sure she had never been there before, even before she espied a friendly gas-lamp, and by its light read the inscription on a milestone—Red Cross, seven miles.

Poor Hyacinth! Already she had walked at least ten miles; she was weary and wet through, the other seven was an utter impossibility. She looked around; she saw no signs of a village or sheeps, nor even a friendly cottage where she could apply for shelter. A long, high wall faced the road, doubtless enclosing private grounds; there was no passers-by to appeal to for aid. Hyacinth's brain tottered; she seemed unconscious of all but her fatigue; she must lie down or she should die; and so, forgetting Miss Johnson's anxiety, forgetting the terrible risk of such a step, she sank upon the cold ground, her fair head pillowed on the old milestone.

(To be continued.)

REMOVING INDIAN-INK MARKS.—There is no method known of removing Indian-ink markings that have been pricked into the skin save by the process in which they were introduced. The superficial application of any remedy to remove it will be utterly useless. The only method that will prove efficacious is the painful and tedious one of pricking the skin as was done when the markings were made, and squeezing out the solid particles of colouring matter with the blood. If this be done carefully and thoroughly the marks may be removed; but in no other way can it be done, except by actually cutting out the marked piece of skin.

SAVED BY LOVE.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"**LORD MACIVOR!**" cries Esme, with a little hysterical gasp, as if he were some apparition—something that having been buried, now rose up again to remind her painfully of the past.

"Yes, Lady Croyland, I have just returned to England, and thought I would run down here to see how you were getting on. I read of the sad demise of Captain Dorman."

Then, perceiving that Esme is too full of conflicting emotions to answer, he turns to old Margaret, saying,—

"Why, you here. This is, indeed, a pleasant surprise."

"Yes, my lord; but I am only a visitor like yourself, but I cannot keep away from my young mistress."

"Heaven bless you, Margaret, for your true, loyal friendship for one who has been cruelly treated."

"Margaret is the only link between my unhappy self and the past," sighs Esme, drying her eyes and smiling through her tears, first at one, then the other, thanking Heaven for having given her two such staunch friends.

Esme cannot but own to herself how much improved Lord MacIvor is in appearance. His handsome face, browned by many an Eastern sun, stalwart of frame, a veritable Achilles, he towers above her, his frank eyes full of a tender light, although he is without hope of ever winning this woman, whom he loved when he thought her free, and, having given her his heart, cannot take it back.

"But one that is forged, I can see, by true affection. I would rather possess the true friendship of one faithful heart than a mine of wealth."

The old lady's face glows with pride at the laird's commendation.

"You are very kind, my lord, to praise an old body like me for any little kindness I may have shown to my much ill-used lady. The world would be a better place if we all tried to make it so."

"Is there no hope of reconciliation?" he asks, earnestly. "Is it possible that Lord Croyland is still implacable?"

Margery looks across at Esme inquiringly, for she suspects that it only wants a few words of love and tenderness from Warren to win back his wife's heart, for she can see that where such devotion exists for the child the father cannot be hateful to its mother.

"I have placed the seal of forgetfulness on that page of my life, and have no wish to erase it," says Esme sadly, but yet resolutely.

Such a gleam of hope comes into his face as he listens to these words—hope that one day she may free herself and become his wife, his very own—to hold for ever and aye.

Esme feels that the conversation is taking an awkward turn, so asks his lordship to take a cup of tea, which he accepts eagerly.

There is the same exquisite tremour running through his frame as his hand comes into contact with hers when she passes his cup, the same delightful sense of bliss as he gazes at the lovely face so dreamy, but peaceful.

"How beautiful she is!" he thinks, as he sips his tea with as much relish as though it were nectar. "I thought time would work its own cure. I wish now I had not trusted myself to look on her sweet face again. If she were happy, safe in his protection, love and home, I could banish my madness once and forever; but to see her neglected, deserted, drives me crazy, makes my heart pulsate with wild joy."

There is a strange silence among them, each feeling constrained—that stillness when the heart is too full of sadness for speech.

Little Esme, noticing the lull, supplies the want by prattling in her own childish fashion, delighting him by her sweet confidences.

She had perched herself upon his knee, and they are the best of friends, and Lord MacIvor

sits and listens with intense pleasure to her chatter, loth to tear himself away from this paradise.

"May I come and see you again, little fairy?" he asks, as he takes his leave.

"Yes, please," replies the child, "and bring me the prettie ickle bird," alluding to his promise of presenting her a foreign bird of gay plumage.

Little Esme toddles by his side down the garden path, and watches him through the gate till he turns the corner of the lane; then runs in, exclaiming joyously,—

"Gemma doing to bring me birdie, mamma, soon."

"Is it wise of me to permit his visits?" Esme thinks wistfully. He is the soul of honour, but what dire misery came from the very same cause in the long ago? How difficult it is to understand true wisdom."

"Margaret," she says, aloud, "do you know I was sadly troubled when Lord MacIvor asked just now if he might come again. I permitted my darling child to answer yea. I did not like to appear unkind to one who has been three years an exile for my sake. What had I better do? You are wiser than I—advise me?"

"I should meet him, dearie, the same as you did just awhile ago, calm and dignified, as becomes the wife of Lord Croyland. He is too high-souled a gentleman to take advantage of your welcome."

So it happened that when he called the next day, bringing a magnificent present of birds for his little friend, he is again received by Esme.

She is standing at the window, watching her child play on the patch of lawn. Tall, slender, with a serene purity in her face, an unconscious grace of a queen in her bearing, there is a far-away expression in her dusky eyes, and the lilies vie with the roses on her cheeks.

The firm white throat stands out clear on the well-shaped shoulders.

She wore a plain black silk dress, thickly tucked with crape; in her hand a cluster of passion-flower buds.

The sunlight falls on the grandly-poised head and white throat.

There is a shadow in her eyes, a tinge of sadness in her sweet smile, a cadence of pathos in her voice as she greets her visitor.

"I—I accepted your sweet little daughter's invitation, you see," he says, rather confusedly. "Am I welcome, Lady Croyland, or does it revive memories you wish to bury in oblivion?" this in a tender, tremulous tone, that goes straight to her heart.

"What my Esme says and does I always endorse; she is my little guide and comfort, my all that is precious on earth," she replies, softly.

"How you love this blossom of yours, Lady Croyland! If she were not so dear to me I really believe I should almost envy her your devotion—that is, I mean (this hesitatingly), if I were your husband."

Her eyes drop beneath their lashes at his words, for there is a warmth in them that almost alarms her.

"But you surely do not forget our little compact in Edinburgh?" she says, significantly.

"What was that?" he asks, quickly, paling under her womanly reproof and dignity of ing.

"Surely you do not forget that you promised to be a brother to Esme's mother, therefore, an uncle to her?" she says, placidly.

"I own I did, but that was years ago," he answers, ruefully, "and I never imagined your sweet life was to be sacrificed in this miserable fashion."

"Do you regret your promise?" she asks. "Do you wish to revoke it?"

"No, oh, no! Heaven knows I would be brother, uncle, anything for your sake; it is not that. To serve you and yours is my one aim in life; but I cannot endure seeing you waste your precious future in this cruel way—

you who ought to be the queen of a husband's home and heart."

"What if the husband refuses to accept the trust?"

"I would free myself from so unworthy a partner," he replies, warmly, "burst asunder the galling fetters that bound me to a man who is selfish, not deserving the sacred title of husband or father."

"Is it well to speak so bitterly of an absent one?" she asks, reproachfully.

"I pray you not to condemn me," he urges, "or deem me a mean coward because I protest against this pitiful conduct of the man who swore to love and cherish you at God's holy altar. I must speak even if you banish me from your presence to wander about the world a wretched wraith, indifferent to life even."

"Believe me when I say it would be better far not to dwell upon such a dangerous theme, Lord MacIvor; it can only bring unhappiness to you—to me."

"The bonds of prudence are unloosed," he says, excitedly; "it is too late. I must speak; remember my heart's best and dearest love was given to you. Forgive me for saying it, but your husband never lavished such a wealth of devotion on you even when you stood a bride at his side. Consider the hopeless, joyless existence mine has been for years, knowing that you were bound to a man hard and unyielding—inexorable to all sense of reason!"

"Why talk of what cannot be altered?" she protests, her lips quivering, her eyes filling with tears; "vain regrets are useless now, and I am fully resigned to my lot."

"And yet there are tears in your eyes," he says, gravely. "You tell me you are content, while anguish is written on every expression of your face! Oh, my lost dear love, do not trifle with your future. I cannot resist this opportunity of trying to win you. Surely I dare not risk much if by my earnest prayers I could abjure you to renounce this man who has dared to neglect you thus; cruelly and shamefully. On my knees I would plead you to become my wife, to bless me with one whom I deem not less than an angel—spotless and pure as any who dwell in the realms of light."

"It can never be. My love and allegiance, at least, belong to his child. How could I look into her innocent face and say, 'you have a father living, but I have robbed you of the honour and halo of his sacred name by giving you another father whose right of loving, whose very relationship to your mother is a stain, a stigma that will clog your young life, till in very shame you would turn with scorn from one whom you would cease even to love?' Oh, Angus, I beseech you to forget me in that sense. Remember my poor Warren was once your dearest friend, your comrade, almost a brother in affection."

"I do remember it too well, and the vile insults he has heaped upon you—on me, who would have made his cause mine had anyone dared to say one harsh word of him," he says, passionately. "I can hear his terrible accusation ringing in my ears at this very moment when he accused me of being a dastard—a thing so contemptible that it makes all the blood rush into my veins as I think how base was the vile slander hurled on us both."

"He was mad with jealousy, and not responsible for his words," she observes, soothingly; "on me rests the blame for giving a colouring to his suspicions. I was a thoughtless, headstrong girl."

"And he a brute to believe you capable of anything wrong. I would have staked my life on your loyalty and innocence, had you been my wife, before the whole world."

"Because you knew me better; your noble nature threw the mantle of charity over a rash, wilful girl's conduct. You have a large heart that searches beyond the surface, a nature to be revered for its fealty and deep strong faith," she says, softly, but with a little tremor in her voice as she thinks how how bright and joyous her life might have been linked to such a man.

"Do not praise me," he groans; "every

word that falls from your lips stab me, for they are the death-knell to my most cherished hopes, for I know too well our lives will be severed again—mine to exile, yours to—well, a millstone."

"Not so, Angus; my days will be spent in teaching my child to avoid the quicksands and shoals her misguided mother fell into so heedlessly."

"And you really mean to immolate yourself on the altar of supposed wifely duty for a man whose days and nights are spent in the feverish excitement of a gambling den?"

"It cannot be true!" she gasps, with colourless lips.

"It is too true, would that it were not; his life is being wasted, ruined by dissipation."

"How have you learned such dire news?" she falters.

"It is common talk, I grieve to tell you; wine and dice are his sole companions."

"It is too dreadful," she moans. "I am the cause of this fearful change; I feel it, I knew it."

"I deny that you are," he returns hotly; "you are not responsible for his folly."

"Poor Warren! my heart bleeds for you," she murmurs half aloud. "Oh! that I had been wise in the long ago, you had not wasted your bright manhood thus—if I could only save you!"

"I fear he is too far engulfed in his downward career for even you to do that. He is simply reckless, lost to all sense of duty, of honour itself. Why, Croylands, the home of a long line of brave men who have fought in field and flood is actually mortgaged over his venerable mother's head, his fortune squandered, his constitution shattered, ruined. Oh, Esme! have some compassion upon me, whose whole life is bound up in your future happiness? Do not, I entreat, wreck it by vain regrets for a man so lost to all that is right or just, that I shudder to contemplate the end of it all."

"The lower he sinks the more he will need pity and sympathy," she returns, firmly, a great throb at her heart as she notes the passionate pain expressed in his face at her words—words that tell him: this peerless woman, whom to look upon even sends an exquisite thrill through his whole frame—is never to be anything but a friend! The sweet dream is over, for ever and aye.

"You will cleave to him even if he drags your honoured name with his," he says, hoarsely.

"It is his name and our child's, but I pray Heaven to avert such a fearful calamity. In any case I will stand by and defend him. When the world frowns or spurns him my place would be at his side; there you will find me should ruin overtake him."

"Heaven bless you!" he says, reverently; "you are an angel indeed. I will bear my burthen bravely for your sake. You have taught me what a true woman should be; all the despair you will never know. The better part of my soul seems gone to know I have lost you."

"Time will efface my image," she puts in gently. "Some day you will meet a good woman, fair and sweet, who will love you with a heartwhole affection—whose life will be reflected in your smiles!"

"Never, Esme! no woman will ever efface you. My existence henceforth will have but one hope, one aim, and that will be to save your husband—to reconcile you to him."

"And you will do that?"

"Yes, I swear it solemnly. He shall come to you for pardon. I will dog him from continent to continent—be his good genius, his guardian angel, for your sake."

"You will save him?"

"Yes, at any cost. Are you satisfied?"

"I am more than that, dear Angus," she falters. "Noble brother, I never was nearer loving you than at this moment; such devo-

tion that a tender sister could lavish will be yours."

A mist of tears rushes into his eyes at her words, and his reply is to fold her in his arms and press the broad white brow with his lips with the tender reverence one feels when they give the last parting kiss to their beloved dead.

"Good-bye, best-beloved sweet sister," he says, tearing himself away from her too seductive presence. "Be comforted; I shall be near Warren to guard him from himself."

An hour later Lord MacIvor is seated in his hotel buried in deep, conflicting emotions; his brain burned, his heart seemed dead—all hope, joy crushed out of his life.

"I'll be true to my word," he mutters moodily. "Warren shall save the old acres if I beggar myself. I will prove myself worthy of her dear trust. She called me dear Angus, noble brother! Heaven! how my heart leaped at that moment! Sweet, lost love, your constancy and truth has vanquished me. From this hour my fortune—my life—shall be dedicated to you, and to redeeming him."

That night he started for Baden-Baden where he heard Lord Croyland had betaken himself.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Confound ill-luck," groans Lord Croyland, as with careworn face, from which all joy seemed fled, he toils his weary way to his hotel, cleaned out as usual. "I veritably believe the fiend himself is among those harpies. If things don't turn soon I shall be ruined. My poor mother homeless! What an accursed fool I have been; staked my fortune, every penny is gone; then in desperation I jeopardised my roof-tree. It will kill the father; she will never survive the disaster. Oh, Esme! you have much to answer for; you have been the cause of my misery; you drove me to the dole. Had I loved you less it wouldn't have gone so hard upon me."

He, with unsteady hands, drains glass after glass of wine before he seeks his couch, not to rest, but to toss his hot, fevered brain on his pillow in fitful delirium; over and anon to snatch a few minutes' forgetfulness, to wake up suddenly with a vivid recollection of his misery, standing out bold and clear, haunting him with hateful distinctness.

"Would that I could purchase oblivion!" he would groan. "Is there no Lethe, no escape, for a poor wretch?"

Remorse was evidently playing havoc with his mind and body, gnawing at his very vitals; for conscience is a small, but potent voice that will not be stilled, try ever so hard to banish it as poor mortals may.

"Get me a soda and brandy. I've had a wretched night; I feel jaded to death," is his order to his maid, when at last the bright golden sunlight bursts in all its glory through the curtains. "Pull the curtains to, can't you! I detest such a glare" (this perversely).

"I wish he wouldn't dip so freely into the wine of a night," grumbles his valet, as he sets about to obey his master's order. "He wakes up as irritable as any old party with a gouty foot."

"I must make a plunge to-day and fight against this infernal ruin of ill-luck; it can't always be against me," he says, as he goes through his toilet with his usual care, and crumpling his purse with bank notes. "They say the devil takes care of his own; it's high time he attended to me; for goodness knows I have been more than attentive to his Satanio majesty since my awakening. Strange that years have passed, and yet Angus and I have never met face to face, and yet we have been within a stone's throw of each other frequently—fate, I suppose."

Daintily and carefully attired he sallies forth as usual, with one hope, one aim—to regain some of his lost fortune from that noble jade called chance.

He makes his way to the gambling casino, the bane of Monte Carlo, the curse of one of

the prettiest spots where flowers grow in profusion, amid the most sordid of atmospheres, tainted as it is by avarice and vice.

Warren takes a hasty survey of the crowd of players, then seats himself at the green board, a glitter of excitement in his eyes.

The croupiers are busy calling the numbers which come out. There is a flutter of expectancy among the group as the English milord takes his accustomed seat.

"Holy Moses! These English noblemen have plenty of pluck in them. They never know when they are beaten," says a wily Jew, who has the usual caution and finesse of his race, and never hazards more than ten francs at a sitting. "He must be immensely rich—a fine fat pigeon to pluck."

"Be cautious, Mr. Nathan," whispers his friend, "the swell may hear you saying and make a pother. I don't like him; eyes; they glare savagely at you at times."

Note after note is staked by Warren to be caught up by the winners, till he becomes restless, with a dogged determination to wrestle with fate, come what may.

His eyes are full of fire, almost fierce, and they glitter with the gambler's lurid light as he repeatedly finds himself a loser.

His brain is on fire, and his hands tremble like aspen leaves, as he fingers the crisp notes that lay by his side.

Presently his attention is suddenly caught by an individual who has just taken his seat—a shabby genteel-looking man, of sinister aspect, whose piercing eyes scan the group keenly, before riveting his attention to the game.

"Why, there's Viche, I declare!" leaps a swell from the regions of masherdom to another choice spirit. "The fellow is always cropping up wherever I go; my luck will desert me now; it always does when he's near."

"What twaddle you talk!" returns his friend; "Viche isn't half a bad fellow; he plays plucky too. The world doesn't seem to have used him very kindly; he appears doped shabby."

And so the human hive of babbling bees buzz, while the silver rakes draw in the piles of gold.

Oscar Viche plays on game after game with a calm demeanour worthy of a better cause.

"Luck is entirely against me to-day," he remarks cynically to his neighbour, sitting beside him. "Cards and women are sorry jades; when a man is out of elbows they seem to withdraw their smiles as if by one consent."

"To return when fortune deigns to smile upon a poor wretch again," replies his companion, shrugging his shoulders, deprecatingly.

By Heaven! I haven't a shiver left," mutters Viche, savagely, after about an hour's repeated ill-fortune. "Never saw such a run of desperate bad chances; the very fiend himself must be abroad to-day."

After sitting in moody silence for a few minutes he makes a sudden resolve, and fumbling with nervous fingers in his pocket he produces a morocco case, and, touching a spring, reveals a magnificent diamond bracelet, nestling in purple velvet.

"There's no help for it," he thinks, as he gazes at the costly gleaming thing that flashes sparks of light and coloured fires, as if to reproach him for his perfidious sacrifice. "I must have money. Who knows perhaps this will turn the tide? Here goes"—this as he places it on the green cloth, shimmering and sparkling.

"Holy Moses! those are the finest diamonds I ever saw!" exclaims the Israelite, animatedly, before mentioned. "They are of the finest water!" stretching out his hand to get hold of the case to take a nearer view of them, and attracting the attention of Lord Croyland to the glittering bauble.

Before the Jew can clutch the bracelet a strong hand is laid on it, and with a smothered oath Warren rises, with livid countenance and wrath in his eyes, and cries furiously,—

"Thief! betrayer! I denounce you. This is my property; a part of the Croyland diamonds. I have waited for years to track you; at last we meet face to face." As he speaks he takes the bracelet out of its case and puts it in his pocket, and then flings the case full in the face of Viche with such force that it cuts his lip, and the blood flows freely from the wound.

"You shall pay dearly for this," hisses Oscar beneath his breath, as he wipes the blood with his cambric kerchief; "you shall bite the dust, my fine milord."

The pair stand glaring at each other furiously, while the company look on curiously; for used as they are to strange scenes, this is out of the common, especially as a wealthy English nobleman pockets the valuable bracelet, declaring Oscar Viche a common thief, a man they knew as a constant habitué of every gaming salon on the continent.

Before anyone is aware of it, Lord Croyland rushes towards Viche, and with one heavy, stinging blow levels his man with the floor, his head just catching one of the massive claws of the table.

"This is ugly business," exclaims some of the men; "why didn't you settle your little difference quietly, my lord?"

"Because we English never brook an insult, but resent it on the spot. We are not a cold-blooded race who wait our opportunity to stab an adversary in the dark," he says, haughtily.

"I believe you have killed him, my lord," says one of the croupiers, as he bends down and raises Viche's head; "here's an ugly gash at the back of his head; ouch!" this as the blood trickles in a fine stream on to his hands.

"What's to be done?"

"Send for a doctor immediately," replies Warren, "I will pay his fee."

With this assurance a messenger is despatched in post haste, and very soon a medical man is attending to the prostrate Viche, and, after carefully examining him, orders his removal to some place where he can have perfect quiet and rest.

"Concussion of the brain, through a hard blow, is evidently the cause of it," the doctor says, in answer to Warren's inquiry.

It was all very well to prescribe rest and extreme quiet, but there was not a man among the number assembled who knew where he lived, and not one proffered to place a shelter at his disposal, but shrank away in silence.

"He can be taken to my hotel," says his lordship; "I shall then secure him when he recovers, vile hound that he is."

He then gave instructions for his removal, and strode out into the bright pure air, so fresh and fragrant as it sweeps in waves from the sea, delighting the senses with its health-giving ozone.

"Would that I could forget my misery," he groans, "my wrecked past, which seems to be ever near, ever present! The sunlight mocks me, for it tells me how worthless I am, how degraded. Oh Heavens! how low have we fallen, we Croylands, to find an heirloom that has clasped the arm of many of our noblest dames staked by a scoundrel at a gambling hell, and I perhaps branded as a murderer!"

For days Viche hovered between the dark portals of eternity, tended with unflinching care by a nurse and doctor.

"Spare no expense, no pains to effect his recovery," was Warren's strict orders, for a burning anxiety possessed him to wrench the secret of his connection with Esme.

No beloved brother or dear friend could have received more unremitting care than the sick man. The one purpose of Lord Croyland's life now was devoted to restoring him to health and strength, and he exulted with delight over the irony of fate which had thrown his enemy in his power.

"He cannot elude me now," he muses, triumphantly, "for he is entrapped, caught like a badger in a trap by his own greed and

capidity. No doubt he has disposed of the rest of the suite of diamonds. Oh! shade of my ancestors, I wonder you don't rise from your graves and denounce such an unworthy successor of your honoured name! At all events I will avenge this last insult as becomes a Croyland with my life's blood; it nothing else will wipe the disgrace from our escutcheon."

While Warren is waiting in feverish anxiety to meet Viche face to face, Lord MacIvor is travelling about all over the globe, trying to find his old comrade, Lord Croyland.

It seemed as if fate was against him, for many a day he reached the town or spa just in time to hear of his lordship's departure.

"It's like trying to catch a Will-o-the-wisp," he thinks, gloomily; "I have set myself a task that at the outset seems surrounded with difficulty. If this is the beginning, however on earth the finish will be goodness only knows."

But his was not a nature to be daunted easily; so he continued his search bravely, and all this while the object of it was sinking gradually but surely lower and lower in vice and misery, steeping his senses in wine and brandy, and spending every available hour gambling, as if he was determined to waste back his fortune again from the very jaws of death itself.

To add to his bitter pain and remorse, his eyesight is fast failing him.

"Is this a curse sent to drive me to madness?" he groans, when the doctor who attended Viche told him his sight was in a dangerous state. "What means can I take to save it from becoming worse?"

"My advice is perfect rest for the eyes, stay at home, cost what it may."

"What is this blight that is to doom me to a life of torture?" he demands, bitterly.

"A kind of disease that attacks all managers of persons, what we in the profession call a cataract, produced by mental worry, in some cases combined with a weak constitution. I should advise you immediately starting for England, where some of our best ophthalmic surgeons could be obtained."

"What if it's impracticable for me to go just at present?"

"I should still adhere to my most urgent advice, my lord; all considerations should be set aside where so important a subject is concerned. Sight is such an invaluable gift that we should think seriously before we trifle with such a blessing."

"I must meet him before I start," muses Warren, when the doctor is gone. "I could not give up my cherished hope of knowing what he is to my wife. He shall confess: I will bear this torturing suspense no longer. These years of doubt and misery shall be explained."

That evening Oscar Viche is at last pronounced out of danger, and in a feeble voice he asks how long he has been ill, and who is acting the Samaritan.

"I was told not to tell you," chirps the garrulous old nurse, "but if you won't tell milord, I'll let you into the secret."

"My lord!" Viche murmurs; "then I am under the roof of Lord Croyland?"

"Yes, that is the downright truth, and a more liberal gent I never wish to serve," replies the dame.

"He has got me here for a purpose," Viche mutters; "he means to force the truth from me. I remember everything now; he felled me down in the Casino before I knew he was upon me. I must escape, I dare not betray poor Esme, I am a miserable scoundrel, but I can't do that. She trusted me, I promised, so help me Heaven I will not break it. Oh! for a little strength; I feel like a baby."

That evening, when the nurse had taken her usual nip of cognac and was peacefully dozing in her arm-chair, Oscar Viche stole out of the room and the hotel without drawing anyone's attention. He glided into the quiet stillness like a shadow.

"What did you say, woman?" demands Lord Croyland, an hour later, when the nurse

bursts in his apartments in terror and alarm.

"The gentleman is not in his bed, or anywhere in the hotel, my lord," she sobs; "he has run away while I was having a little nap."

"Foiled again!" Warren cries, purple with rage. "Is there justice on earth?"

(To be continued.)

ENGLISH CUSTOMS IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

It was possible for a woman to purchase a royal license to marry whom she would, always granted with the proviso that it was not to be one of the king's enemies. Widows very often had recourse to this measure; maidens more rarely. With the former it might denote either an attachment to some particular person, or a mere desire not to be forced into remarriage; but a spinster who was not a nun was never heard of in the middle ages. There were a very few old bachelors—rare phenomena, but an old maid was never seen outside the cloister. The nearest approach to it was in the case of a few ladies difficult to please, who delayed marriage until middle age was reached. It was rarely that this could be the case, since they were seldom allowed to please themselves. The colour which was pretty certain not to be worn at a wedding was white, for white was the deepest possible mourning, and was worn by widows immediately after bereavement. Medieval education was a very different thing from that of the present day. Among the higher classes both sons and daughters were sent into the service of a gentleman or lady and educated in the necessary duties of gentle people. Why they were not taught at home is not quite clear; probably a better discipline was secured under stranger guardianship. A girl was thoroughly trained in housewifery, medicine, and some slight surgery, if fortunately placed, needle-work, etc., sometimes to read and to write also. The boys were trained in warlike arts, to ride, to shoot, and so forth; most frequently the reading and writing were omitted in their cases. Royal personages were obliged to study both reading and writing, and the royal signatures are interesting and often characteristic. Henry VIII.'s hand is very characteristic; doubtless, as Isaac Disraeli has said of him, "he split many a good pen." Mary wrote a pretty Italian hand, but rather sprawling and irregular. "Never could any lady write a more beautiful hand than the early Italian one of Elizabeth; and I hope no lady ever wrote any uglier than the horrible scrawl of her queenly years." The food, cookery, and medicine of the middle ages were alike in respect that they were most elaborate and astounding concoctions, often repulsing to the last degree. Only iron constitutions, it would seem, could sustain such fearful admixtures of indigestible and unlikely food, yet our forefathers and mothers thrive and grew hearty upon them.

If you would have a thing kept secret never tell it to any one; and if you would never have a thing known of you, never do it.

EVOLUTION OF THE FAN.—One evening when the beautiful daughter of a powerful Chinese mandarin was assisting at the grand feast of lanterns, she was so overcome by the heat that she was obliged to take off her mask. But to expose her face to the eyes of the profane and vulgar was a serious offence against the law, so, holding the mask as closely as possible to her features, she fluttered it to give herself air, and the rapidity of the movement still concealed her. The other ladies present, witnessing this hardy but charming innovation, imitated it, and at once ten thousand hands were fluttering ten thousand masks. Thus the fan was evolved and took the place of the mask.

UPS AND DOWNS.

THE year successive seasons brings—
The spring, the summer-time,
With wealth of bloom; the autumn leaves
That die in frost and rime.
And so is life—a see-saw game,
Alternate ups and downs;
To-day a brilliant streak of luck—
To-morrow, fortune frowns.

The brimming cup of joy we quaff,
And smile to taste how sweet;
And then we see the bitter dregs
Ere laughter is complete.
We tread among the thorns to-day;
The morrow's sunbeams rise;
And lo! 'mid flowers and singing-birds
The onward pathway lies.

When hopes are brightest, oftenest then
They fade away and die;
When night is darkest, daylight breaks
Above the eastern sky.
Nor you, nor I, my friend—nor e'en
Our neighbour o'er the way—
Can tell what whirl of fortune's wheel
Will turn for us to-day.

But, friends, let's wear a merry face
Through all our ups and downs,
For life is full of little oys,
Though fortune smiles or frowns.
If we must play the see-saw game,
Why, let's enjoy it, too.
In ups and downs, in smiles and frowns,
Let's laugh the whole way through!

C. G. T.

THE MISTRESS OF LYNWOOD.

—30—

CHAPTER XLII.

WHATEVER may have been the detective's private impressions with regard to Nathalie's guilt in the first instance they were entirely in her favour after his interview with her, and he was as convinced of her innocence as Hugh himself.

Luckily she liked his manner, and felt a certain amount of confidence engendered by it; and, as a consequence, she was very open, and told him all there was to tell without a shadow of reserve.

"And you entertain no suspicions of your maid?" said Healy, after a very exhaustive conversation.

"No; not the least in the world. In fact, I have been accustomed to regard her as rather a superior sort of personage, for she has somewhat held herself aloof from the other servants."

"Were her habits at all peculiar?"

"No, except that she was very fond of solitude, and would often wander about in the evenings."

"Where did she 'wander'?"

"Very often in the plantation."

The detective pricked up his ears.

"Can you remember on what occasions you have seen her there?"

Nathalie pondered for a few minutes.

"I recollect seeing her there twice, and each time I had been with Mr. Farquhar. I can fix the date of the one occasion, for it was the night someone came in my room and cut my wrist."

"What is that? Pray tell me all particulars."

Nathalie did so, the detective listening very carefully.

"Is Warren near-sighted? I ask because I observe she wears spectacles," he said, as she concluded.

"She says she is, but when she came to me first she wore no spectacles."

"In what way did you engage her?"

"I advertised, and she answered the advertisement."

"I suppose she sent references?"

"Yes, one was from a lady of title, and the other from someone in London. They are both in my desk, of which I will give you the key if you like."

"Thank you; I think I had better examine them. Did Warren write from London?"

"Yes, but I forget the address; however, you will find it on her letter, which is with the references?"

Nathalie was anxious to know if any news had been heard of her brother, and was answered by Hugh in the negative. The only result of the inquiries made showed that the man and woman who had got into the cab outside the lodge-gates were not Lionel and Adrienne.

"I will make inquiries," said Healy. "I am interested in the affair myself, and shall no doubt be able to learn something ere long."

After leaving Nathalie, he went to the police-station, where he was allowed to see the pistol, and then he found that the cartridge case he picked up fitted perfectly, and had undoubtedly been used in it.

"I am quite satisfied with my day's work," he said to Hugh, as they were driving home. The latter did not feel by any means so complacent; as a matter of fact, each hour that passed only increased his anxiety, for it brought a fuller comprehension of Nathalie's peril, and his own helplessness.

Healy was very thoughtful until they pulled up in front of King's Dene, where they were just in time to see Isabel Farquhar come down the steps on her way to the carriage in waiting for her. Hugh came forward and offered his hand to assist her in, but she declined his help.

"Are you going to town?" he asked.

"No, I shall have to give evidence before the magistrates, so my presence is required in W—, and I shall stay at an hotel there until after the examination is over. Then I shall go to town, where I shall remain until I have to give evidence at the Assizes."

"You do not know that there will be a trial," he said, conscious of the sting in her words.

"Oh, yes, I am sure of it. There can be no doubt in the minds of sensible people that Nathalie Egerton is a murderer," she responded, and then got into the carriage and was driven off.

Healy looked after her, with raised eyebrows.

"There goes a Tartar," he remarked. "I shouldn't care to have such a woman for a wife."

And Hugh mentally echoed this opinion.

The detective, after he had had some refreshment, proceeded to Nathalie's room, and there examined the letters she had referred to as having been received from Warren; they were addressed from "No. 5, Barton-street, Kentish Town," and the references enclosed were from the Countess of D—, Park-lane, and from a Mrs. Selby, Camden-road.

He looked at his watch, found there was yet time to telegraph, and despatched a message to the former, which was answered in less than an hour.

The answer ran thus:—

"The Countess of D— knows nothing whatever of the person calling herself Eliza Warren, whose name she has not heard before to-day. She certainly never gave a reference to such a person."

"Ah! then the reference was a forgery; I thought so," remarked the detective, putting the telegram away in his note-book. "As for the other one, Mrs. Selby may be a friend of her own, so I don't think I will risk an application to her. So far, so good."

He spent the rest of the evening wandering about the house, and making all sorts of inquiries from the servants, every one of whom he questioned in their turn. They were inclined to think him rather mad, for he asked them about trivial things that, they decided, could certainly have no bearing on the murder,

and was most patient in listening to the expression of their own opinion on the subject. Without pointedly making her the ostensible object of his queries, he yet contrived to find out all he wanted to know concerning Warren, which was to the effect that she was not popular, as she declined to associate with the other servants, and was looked upon as rather "uncanny" by the generality.

He asked about her dresses too, and was informed that she always wore black, but so did most of the other maids in the afternoon, so she was not singular in that respect.

When bedtime arrived, Mr. Egerton came into the detective's room to see if he required anything.

"I am all right, thank you, sir," said Healy. "I have no intention of going to bed to-night."

"Indeed! Why do you purpose sitting up?" in surprise.

"I can't explain my reasons now, sir—I may perhaps do so later on."

The Squire did not press him, but went downstairs again, where Hugh was awaiting him. The relations between the two men had immediately assumed a friendly nature, for Mr. Egerton felt that no one would exert himself so much on Nathalie's behalf as the young artist, and therefore everything that had formerly passed between them was tacitly ignored on both sides, and Hugh dropped into the place Lionel would have occupied had he been there.

The Squire spoke of his son that night.

"Surely, wherever he may have taken that misguided young woman, he will hear news of his sister's position, and will return," he said, for like the rest of the world, he had no doubt that Adrienne's disappearance meant an elopement. Nathalie was the only person who kept up a belief in Lionel's honour, and Lady Lynwood's purity.

Healy's room was—at his own request—on the same floor as that occupied by Warren, and opened into the same passage. After the household had retired he crept very cautiously to her door, and peeped through the keyhole. She was sitting at a table, with her back to him, and engaged in sewing, but on what description her work was it was impossible to tell.

The detective watched for about half-an-hour, and then returned to his own apartment, where he sat at a table, engaged in writing, but with the door ajar, so that he might hear any sound.

Nothing, however, broke the silence, and by-and-by he again went to Warren's door.

The light was out now—apparently she had retired.

Healy hesitated, then gently turned the handle, and finding the door was not locked, stepped inside the room.

It was empty.

"By Jove! she must be quiet in her movements for me not to have heard her!" he muttered, with some admiration, and then he turned the light of his lantern on a dress hanging up behind the door. It was a black alpaca, with a small pattern on it, and exactly matched the fragment he had picked up from the tree, but it seemed nearly new, and there was not a hole anywhere visible—not even a darn. Healy particularly examined the sleeves, but they were perfect.

Having done this, he drew the slide of his lantern, and cautiously went out into the passage, closing the door behind him, and then he descended the stairs into the servants' hall.

Hardly had he reached it before the door was pushed open from the outside, and Warren came in, her face and head muffled in the black folds of a shawl. She proceeded to draw the bolts very quietly, and just as she had concluded this operation the detective stepped forth, and grasped her arm, while he let the rays of his lantern fall full on her face.

She did not move or utter a cry, though a sharp gasp came from her throat, and Healy felt a certain admiration for her courage

"What have you been doing outside at this time of night?" he said.

"Loose me, and I will tell you," she responded, quietly, shaking herself free from his clasp. Then she continued, in the same tone, "I could not sleep and was looking through my window, and a little locket I always wear round my neck fell down on the gravel below, so I came to look for it."

"And have you found it?"

"No, it must have got lodged in the creepers or something, for I can't see it anywhere. I must look again in the daylight."

She spoke in a quiet, matter-of-fact tone that almost vouched for what she said being the truth, and on Healy taking his hand from her arm, wished him "good-night," and went upstairs again, as if looking for lockets at one o'clock in the morning were the most ordinary thing in the world.

Healy waited a few minutes, then went outside and looked on the gravel to see if it were possible to trace her footsteps, but this was more than even he could do, for there had been no rain for two days, and the earth was too dry to carry prints in spite of the night dews.

"Where can she have been?" he muttered, in deep chagrin that he had not heard her leave her room and followed her. "I would give ten pounds to find out all she has done to-night. What a fool I was not to have kept my ears open wider!"

Self-reproaches were useless, however, and he went back to his own apartment, and threw himself on the bed.

"It's no good watching any longer now," he said, savagely. "She won't be up to any more mischief to-night, for whatever was the task she undertook I could see by her manner that she had succeeded in it. Ah! well, I must hope for better luck to-morrow."

And he went to sleep and dreamt he was administering a sound thrashing to Mr. Phineas Hyam, while his nephew Alfred cooked on with deep satisfaction and encouraged him.

CHAPTER XLIII.

It is now time to return to Lionel and Adrienne, who we left entering the subterranean passage on the evening of Farquhar's murder.

The girl entered, with all the zest of youth, into the spirit of the undertaking, and her silvery laughter rang out gaily through the stone cave, and was echoed back from the low roof.

Lionel felt himself exhilarated by the mere sound of it.

"Suppose the gipsy's prediction should really be verified," she said, "and you should find your great uncle's wealth?"

"I do not think it by any means improbable. It is quite clear to me that this passage has been made use of within a comparatively recent date—say fifty years. Otherwise I should have had much more difficulty in opening the door than I had. The mystery is, how it has remained so long a secret," responded Lionel.

In fact, the retreat was far from being as close and damp as might have been anticipated, and it had evidently been built for something more than a passage, as it increased in width and height as it proceeded.

Doubtless it had been used, years ago, by smugglers as a hiding-place for their goods, in the days when gentlemen winked at such unlawful deeds, and, as the price of their silence, were always provided with brandy that was none the worse because duty had never been paid on it.

"Doesn't it remind you of the old song of the 'Mistletoe Bough'?" said Adrienne, presently, as she followed him, and looked curiously at the walls, on whose dampness the light he carried shone in partial rays. "Certainly this is not an oaken chest, whose lid shuts with a spring, but if one is gifted

with imagination, one can see the resemblance."

"If one is gifted with imagination one can see anything one chooses," he answered, laughing, and Adrienne continued,—

"I think Lovel and his 'long lost bride' were my favourite hero and heroine in my childhood. I used to believe implicitly in their tragic fate, and I hardly knew which to pity most, the bride who died or the bridegroom who lived."

"The latter," exclaimed Lionel, quickly; "her sufferings were soon over, but his spun themselves out into long years."

"That is true; but think of the horror of such a fate as being locked in any place and suffocated!"

Lionel glanced back rather uneasily, but the door was still open, as he could see from the light that lay behind them, so he reassured himself.

"You have chosen rather a melancholy theme," he observed, with a smile.

"Have I? I always speak out just what happens to be in my mind when I am with you; I have to think before I speak when talking to other people."

Lionel flushed scarlet at this naïve confession, and hurried on until they came to a door, which barred their progress.

There were locks and bolts in plenty on this door, but none of them were fastened; indeed, a huge key, yellow with rust, still stood in the lock, but it was evidently many years since it had been turned.

"The chamber of horrors!" exclaimed Egerton, gaily, pausing in front of it. "I wonder what we shall find inside. Do you think you dare venture in?"

"I don't know. Is anything very dreadful likely to meet our gaze?"

"Spiders for certain, and, perhaps, a rat. I do not think we need fear anything else, only one always likes to pause on the brink of a mystery, and revel in expectations that will probably be disappointed. However, here goes!"

He pushed open the door, and they found themselves in a small stone chamber, destitute of window, and having in one corner a sort of stone receptacle built into the wall. The air was heavier here than in the passage, the latter being much better ventilated; a sort of slime, produced by damp, covered the walls, from which a sickly, noisome odour arose.

"We had better not go any farther; it smells unwholesome," said Lionel, but his companion would not hear of turning back.

"It would be very cowardly now we have come so far," she declared. "Besides, I am really curious to see all there is to be seen, and I have a flask of eau de Cologne in my pocket, which will preserve me against bad odours."

She poured some on her handkerchief, and then offered the scent to her companion. He refused it, with a smiling shake of the head.

"I am not a delicate lady, and my senses are hardened," he said, holding the lantern above his head, so that its rays might be scattered over the cell, for cell it assuredly had been; and one shuddered to think of the hapless prisoners who had probably been incarcerated there, doomed to linger out a miserable existence until a welcome death released them.

When we nineteenth century people talk of the "good old days," and feel inclined to regret them, we ignore the barbarism that existed, the cruelties that were practised, the despotism that prevailed, and was all-powerful. Methinks we have the pull, after all, in spite of our steam-engines and electricity—perhaps, because of them. At all events, we are not liable to be seized and shut up in dungeons all our lives because we happened to have displeased our feudal lords, or to be bricked up in walls in order to make room for some benevolent relative who has cast envious eyes on our possessions. And this is something by way of compensation for paying taxes.

The lantern was only a small one, and consequently lighted but a small portion of the chamber, so, still holding it up, Lionel

advanced to the corner, where, as has already been said, was a sort of cupboard. In this stood an oak box, strongly bound with iron.

"I wonder what it contains!" exclaimed Adrienne, who had followed and peeped over his shoulder. "Is it open?"

"No," answered Lionel.

He tried to raise it, but it was very heavy, almost too heavy for him to move, certainly too heavy to carry.

"Suppose," whispered his companion, in great excitement, "suppose this should prove to be the buried treasure?"

The same thought had already struck Lionel, and his heart was beating rather quickly, but he would not allow himself to hope too much, for fear of a disappointment.

"More likely it is full of stones!" he answered, lightly; but all the same, he felt it would be impossible to go away without making sure. So he took from his pocket a strong chisel with which he had provided himself and tried to force open the lid.

After a while it yielded, although not without some difficulty, for the lock had evidently been an unusually strong one before attacked by the rust that had accumulated during many years. Then he raised the lid, while Adrienne watched his movements with breathless interest, standing on tiptoe so as to see better.

A little cry broke from her lips as the light fell on the contents of the box; for do! their wildest expectations were exceeded, and they beheld what looked like a mine of untold wealth—golden guineas gleaming up through the darkness in apparently countless profusion.

Yes, Rebecca had been right; for here was the treasure of which she had spoken, and it had fallen to Lionel's lot to discover it.

There would be no more money difficulties for his father—no more constant studying of account-books, so as to see how best to make both ends meet. All that was over, and golden vistas of untold wealth opened before the young man's excited vision, as he saw in front of him the money hidden away by his ancestor—for that this was the result of Cyrus Egerton's miserly life, he had no doubt.

Wild ideas flashed through his brain. Should he be in time to save his sister from the marriage that he felt was hateful to her, and that he suspected she had promised to undertake for the sake of Farquhar's riches?

His attention was recalled by the voice of Adrienne.

"Is it not like an Arabian night?" she exclaimed; "I can hardly believe that I am not dreaming, or that this is not fairy gold, which will vanish when I touch it."

"Try it, and see," advised her companion.

She lifted a few gold pieces, and let them slip through her fingers; as they fell on the others a metallic sound rang through the chamber, and told the quality of the metal.

"Why, you will be a millionaire!"

"My father will," he responded, "for I suppose no one will dispute his right to this treasure-trove. But I believe such unexpected finds belong to those who discover them, and if so, you have as much right as anyone to the money."

"I waive my claim in your favour," she said, blithely, for her spirits were higher than they had been for a long time. "But what shall you do about the chest? It is too heavy or you to take away."

"Yes, I must leave it here, and get someone to help me carry it into the house. I suppose," laughing, "as it has been safe for so many years, it will be safe for another night."

"I don't know. If I were you, I should not be satisfied until I had it at King's Dene."

"Then we will return at once and get assistance. I expect you have had about enough of this subterranean adventure."

She shook her head, declaring she had enjoyed it immensely, and they were just on the point of leaving the cell, when Lionel's attention became attracted by a ghostly object in the corner behind the door—nothing

more nor less than a human skeleton, whose bones gleamed whitely in the light.

Instantly he comprehended that these must be the remains of Cyrus Egerton himself, who had made use of this cell as a hiding-place for his wealth, and while visiting it had been met by that grim King of Terrors that all his gold was powerless to bribe!

Adrienne's eyes fell on the skeleton at the same moment, and a terrified scream broke from her lips, waking the hollow echoes of the passage.

"Come away, Lady Lyrwood—do not look again," urged Lionel, taking hold of her arm, and leading her from the cell, and back along the passage towards the aperture by which they had effected an entrance.

To his surprise he found it closed.

He released Adrienne, and undevoured to find the spring, but without success, and then came the conviction that it acted only from the outside.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Adrienne. "Cannot you open the panel?"

"No, but I have hardly tried yet," he responded, in a reassuring tone, as he took out his chisel, and prepared to work with it. "Do you mind holding the lantern for me?"

She took it, but her hand trembled so much from her recent shock that it slipped from her fingers, and became extinguished in the fall, thus leaving them in total darkness.

"Oh, I am so sorry!" she exclaimed, penitently. "Have you any matches with you?"

Lionel felt in his pockets and found, to his utter dismay, that he had not even his fume box.

The situation was growing embarrassing, but he tried to console Adrienne's vexation at the accident, and began to work with his chisel.

Naturally his efforts were of no avail, for the darkness was so complete that he could not even see his hand before him, and after half-an-hour's fruitless toil he said,—

"There must be a door at the other end of the passage, leading into King's Dene—let us go and find it."

He groped about until he caught hold of her arm, and then he found what he had before suspected—that she was trembling violently.

"I am afraid you are very much terrified," he said, with an accent of kindest self-reproach. "I shall never forgive myself for having let you come here."

"It was not your fault," she answered, quickly. "I insisted on coming myself."

"Don't be more alarmed than you can help," he whispered, soothingly. "We shall get out before long, and then you will laugh at this adventure."

She said nothing, and they groped their way along the passage, until they came to a door which barred their progress, and on which all Lionel's wrenchings had not the slightest effect.

After some time spent in trying to force it open he desisted in despair, and took Adrienne's hand, with the intention of trying to console her. It was cold as ice.

"Mr. Egerton," she said, her fingers closing convulsively round his, "if we cannot open either of these doors, I do not think there is much chance of anyone thinking of this as a possible retreat and rescue, as is there?"

He did not reply; a deadly fear had assailed him of something too terrible to put into words. But he dared not speak of it to her, and, on the other hand, his lips refused to frame a lie.

"You need not be afraid of telling me the truth," she continued, earnestly. "I do not think I am a coward."

"I know you are not."

"Well, then, are we not in danger of not being able to get away from here?"

A groan escaped his lips.

"Oh, Adrienne, what can I say to you?" he cried, in a burst of agony, and unconscious of the familiarity with which he addressed her; "I would give ten—nay, twenty years of my life—not to have you with me at this pre-

sent moment; my whole fear and anxiety are on your behalf."

"I am sure of it," she returned, softly. "But, believe me, I do not blame you—how can I?"

"I ought to have known better than let you run the least shadow of risk."

"But you did not know there was any risk," she urged; "if you had thought so I am quite sure you would not have let me come."

"Heaven knows I would not!"

By this time a full understanding of their peril had come upon him. He saw little hope of forcing open either exit, and the thickness of the masonry forbade any chance of the loudest cries being heard outside, while it was pretty certain the secret of the passage that had been kept for so many years would not be guessed now.

He was sufficiently versed in the ways of the world to know what people would say with regard to their absence, and he pictured Otho Lynwood's triumph and Sir Ralph's despair when the news reached him. Strange to say, as he thought of the officer, an idea of what had really happened occurred to him, and on the impulse of the moment, he uttered a aloud,—

"I should not be at all surprised if we did not owe our present position to the good office of your husband's nephew," he remarked, bitterly.

"What—Otho?"

"Yes. If he saw us enter, by any chance, he would be likely to close the aperture so as to prevent our escaping—at all events, for some time."

The more he thought over this idea the more probable it seemed, and it brought with it a glimmer of hope, for, unscrupulous as Otho was, Lionel did not think him bad enough to condemn two people to the awful doom of being buried alive, even though it was to his interest that they should be got rid of. He rather inclined to the belief that the soldier intended shutting them up for a day or two, in order to ruin Adrienne's reputation in the eyes of her husband, and that, having achieved his object, he would then release them.

But he could not say this to Lady Lyrwood, and so he was forced to content himself with such vague expressions of comfort as occurred to him.

"Do not despair," he said; "our case is not hopeless, although, I confess, it is very disagreeable. You are very cold, aren't you?"

"Rather," she assented, for the atmosphere in those damp walls was peculiarly still.

He took off his coat and wrapped it round her, in spite of her remonstrances, and then found his way to the cell where they had discovered the treasure, and after taking out a good deal of the gold, and depositing it on the floor, so as to lighten the box, he carried it back, and made Adrienne sit down upon it.

"What a moral!" he thought to himself; "this gold for whose sake men toil and slave, and pine for—of what avail is it now to either of us?"

And then he fell to wondering whether in the years to come, someone might light upon the secret passage, and, exploring it, find their bones, as they had found Cyrus Egerton's.

At all events, he would not be parted from the woman he loved!—His hand separated them, but in death they would be together!

Presently, as might be expected, this inaction grew intolerable, and he began his task of heaving at the door with his chisel over again, but now another misfortune befell him, for the blade of the tool, having too much strain put upon it, snapped off in the middle, and thus prevented his continuing.

"I wonder how long we have been here?" said Adrienne, when he came back.

"I can tell you, for I have a repeater with me," he returned. "It is now half-past eleven, so we have been here nearly three hours."

"Don't leave me again!" she implored, hysterically, fancying he was going away; "I shall go mad if I am left alone."

He knelt down at her side, and, all in a minute, her self-control deserted her, and she let her head fall on his shoulder, while her whole slender frame was shaken by a storm of sobs. He did not attempt to check them; indeed, he thought it better that her emotion should have its natural vent, but he smoothed back the hair from her temples with gentlest, tenderest touches, murmuring the while involuntary terms of endearment—that, however, fell upon deaf ears, for Adrienne was too agitated to be conscious of what he was saying.

Presently she grew calmer.

"I am sorry I gave way like that," she said; "but I could not help it. I will be brave now, or try to be."

"Do you think you could manage to go to sleep for a little while, resting your head on me thus?" suggested Lionel. "Perhaps, when morning comes, daylight will force its way in through some chink or cranny, and I may be able to do something towards our release."

"Do you think it likely?" she exclaimed, catching at the hope with the eagerness of a drowning man trying to save himself by a floating corker.

"I think it very likely," he returned, infusing as much confidence as he could into his voice, as confidence he was very far from feeling.

"And you will not leave me in the meantime?"

"Do, at that you may be sure."

Satisfied on this point, she again rested her head on his shoulder, with the confidence of a trusting child, and though sleep did not come to her, Lionel's close proximity kept her from growing as cold as she had been before, and, at the same time, brought with it a sense of comfort, even under those terrible circumstances.

And so the hours wore on.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Very early in the morning the detective went into Hugh Cleveland's room, and gave him certain instructions, which the artist promised faithfully to obey, after which he had a hasty breakfast, and was driven to W— station, where he caught the first train for town, and arrived at Paddington a little after nine o'clock.

He took a hansom, and was driven to No. 5, Barton-street, Kenish-town, a small and dirty-looking house, in a small and dirty-looking row.

Then he dismissed the cab, and knocked at the door, which was opened by a slatternly-looking woman, whose dress was held together by pins, and who carried a baby in her arms.

"Did you want to see the apartments, sir?" she exclaimed, without giving him time to speak. "Please to come in, sir, and I'll show 'em to you, and I'm sure you'll be pleased with 'em, for nicer rooms for the money it would be impossible to have."

The detective did not interrupt this flow of eloquence, but followed her into a small "parlour," which was certainly cleaner-looking than her own appearance would have warranted one in expecting.

This effect may have been due to a quantity of croquet antimacassars, that had been washed the day before, and were spread over the backs of all the chairs, looking very stiff, if not exactly elegant.

The landlady was beginning to enumerate a long list of the advantages to be enjoyed by anyone fortunate enough to secure the rooms, when she was cut short by her visitor.

"I am not looking for apartments, I am simply come to ask you a few questions about a lodger who was staying here; but," he added, significantly, as he noticed how her face fell, "I will make it worth your while to answer those questions. First of all, you had a young woman here named Eliza Warren?"

"Mrs. Warren? Yes."

"When did she come?"

"Let me see—it was just after baby was vaccinated, and while Anna-Maria was down with the measles—that would be about three months ago," said the woman, after a pause of consideration.

"And when did she leave?"

"Oh! she only stopped three weeks or a month. I told her I wouldn't have taken her in at all if I'd known she was just going to make a convenience of me like that; with a toss of the head, that intimated Warren had not been a particular favourite of her landlady's."

"Now, Mrs. —," began the detective, impatiently.

"Jones, sir!" she said, filling up the blank.

"Thank you. Well, now, Mrs. Jones, I want you to tell me all you know about this Mrs. or Miss Warren, and then I shall hope to be allowed to present this," holding up a sovereign, "to that pretty little baby of yours."

The woman's eyes sparkled greedily at the sight of the gold. She wanted no further persuasion.

"I have not very much to tell, sir, but what I know you are welcome to," she said. "Mrs. Warren came knocking at the door one day, and took the upstairs room—which it's a sitting and bedroom combined—at five shilling a week. She didn't give references, but paid a week's rent in advance, and that did as well. She was very quiet and sulky, I thought, and said she was going to earn her living as a dressmaker, but after she had been here a little more than a couple of weeks, she gave notice she was going to leave, and leave she did."

"Did she ever have any visitors?"

"No, sir, not one."

"Or letters?"

"Well, at first she had no letters at all, but the week before she gave notice one or two came for her. The fact was, she had answered an advertisement she saw in the paper for a maid."

"How do you know that?" interrupting.

"Because she told me; and she said she had lost one of her references, and the lady what had given it her had gone abroad, so she asked me if she could refer her future mistress to a sister of mine that lives in this Camden-road as a housekeeper to a gentleman named Selby, and I told her she could."

"I suppose she made it worth your sister's while to answer the application?"

"Well, sir," shamefacedly, "she treated me and my sister to the theatre one night, and, after all, it was not much to do for a body. When my sister got the letter from the young lady—a Miss Nathalie Egerton it was, because I remember thinking to myself what a pretty name, and I decided to have my next christened the same—well, when my sister got the letter she brought it here, and Miss Warren wrote the answer herself."

"Indeed! What luggage had your lodger with her?"

"Only one small trunk, and a handbox."

"And I suppose she kept the trunk locked?"

"Yes, sir, she was always careful about that."

"But," said the detective, fixing his keen, pale eyes on his companion, "you may have felt some curiosity as to its contents, and it is just possible that one day, when your lodger was out of the way, you took the opportunity of looking inside."

A dark red came into Mrs. Jones's face, and told Healy she was correct in his surmise.

"I don't blame you," he added, with easy cordiality. "Very likely I myself should have done the same thing if I had been similarly situated. Now tell me what the trunk contained."

But Mrs. Jones wished to clear her character before giving the required information.

"My motive for looking in the box was to make sure she was quite respectable," she said, with difficulty; "you see I had no references with her, and I am bound to be very careful."

"Of course you are. What did you discover?"

"Nothing!" exclaimed the woman, with an accent of disappointment. "There wasn't a letter, or a envelope, or a scrap of paper of any sort—the only thing besides clothing was a pistol?"

"A pistol! What sort of a pistol?"

"A pretty, silver-mounted one, with a lot of work about it—made for show more than use, I think."

"Do you remember if there were any initials on it?" asked the detective.

"Yes, there were, but they weren't Mrs. Warren's, for I remember noticing that at the time."

"Were they the letters 'G. F.'?"

Mrs. Jones shook her head. "I really could not tell you, sir, for I have quite forgotten, but I know there were two initials of some kind."

"And you think you would recognise the pistol again, if you saw it?"

"Oh, yes; I am pretty sure I should, for it was quite different to anything I had seen before, and that made me notice it so much. Besides, I thought it rather a strange thing for her to have."

"Now, Mrs. Jones, if I may ask a delicate question—how did you contrive to open that trunk?"

"I found a key on an old bunch that fitted it, but before she went away Mrs. Warren had the lock taken off, and a fresh one put on—a new patent one, I think."

Healy was thoughtful for a few minutes.

"You can tell me nothing more?" he said, at length.

"No, sir, for there is nothing to tell."

"You do not know where Mrs. Warren lived before she came here?"

"It was in the country, I believe, but I have no idea where, for she was that close about her own affairs that there was never any chance of finding out anything about her," in an injured tone.

"She did not leave anything behind—any envelopes, or papers, for instance?"

"Not a scrap. The only thing that was left was an old handbox, and she didn't take that just because it was too rickety to be of any use."

"And where is that now?"

"Upstairs in my bedroom. I put my winter bonnet in it, and tied it round with a handkerchief to prevent it from falling to pieces."

"I should like to see it, if you don't mind."

Mrs. Jones looked surprised at the request, but left the room, presently returning with the handbox in her hand. It was an ordinary-looking blue one, the name of the shop from whence it came having been torn off, and no mark upon it save a railway label—King's Cross.

The detective examined it closely, then said—

"I will trouble you for a little hot water, please."

Mrs. Jones brought it in a teacup, and watched him with the utmost curiosity as he dabbed some on the label with his handkerchief. She scented a mystery, and would have given a good deal to know what was its nature.

Presently the detective peeled off the label, thus exposing to view a second one underneath, with the word "Lexford" upon it.

"Lexford, Lexford!" mused Healy. "That is in Cambridgeshire, about ten or fifteen miles beyond Cambridge, I think. I fancy," bending down, "there is yet another label underneath."

He was right, only this bottom one was not a railway label, but an address stuck on with gum, and it bore, in an unadorned handwriting, the name:—

"Miss Joyce Weston,
Passenger to Lexford."

Mr. Healy put it away in his pocketbook, and held up a sovereign, which the baby clutched in his dirty little fingers.

"I'll wish you good day now, Mrs. Jones"



[LIONEL RAISED THE LID, WHILE ADRIENNE WATCHED HIS MOVEMENTS WITH BREATHLESS INTEREST.]

and thank you very much for your information," he said blithely, as he took up his hat.

"You're very welcome, I'm sure, sir; and thank you kindly, too. I suppose, sir," insinuatingly, "you couldn't tell me who this Mrs. Warren is, or what she has been doing?"

"No, Mrs. Jones, I couldn't; that is the very thing I want to know myself."

And so saying the detective made good his escape, chuckling as he went over this evidence of feminine curiosity.

He had a time-table in his pocket, which he consulted, and then drove to Kentish Town station, and took a ticket for Lexford.

The train did not start for half-an-hour, so he spent the interval in reading the morning papers, which were full of the romantic and mysterious tragedy that had taken place in W—shire.

"These reporters are clever fellows," he muttered, by way of comment; "they contrive to spin out a few facts until they look a great deal, and all the while they are as ignorant as their readers."

At Cambridge he changed carriages, following a middle-aged woman, who had previously asked the guard if "this went to Lexford."

It was an easy enough matter to get into conversation with this person, and presently he learned from her that she kept a shop at Lexford—had done so for the last ten years.

"Then you know some people named Weston living there?" he said.

"Weston. There are two or three families of Weston in the village."

"The Christian name of the young woman I am speaking of is Joyce."

"Poor Joyce!" with an expression of much interest. "Do you happen to know what has become of her?"

"Yes; she is in a situation as lady's-maid in the country."

"I'm glad of that," said the woman, who seemed to be a good-natured sort of person.

"There's no reason why she shouldn't keep straight now in spite of what's past."

By a few skilful questions Healy learned Joyce's past history—how she had gone away to London with some rich gentleman, who had deserted her; how she had come back for the birth of her child, and left some five or six weeks later, the baby remaining in the care of her sister Lucy.

"As good a girl as ever lived," emphatically declared his informant.

Healy found his way without any difficulty to the Weston's cottage, where Lucy was sitting sewing in the front room, the baby asleep in a cradle at her feet.

She seemed surprised as she saw the stranger coming up the garden, but invited him to enter, and offered him a chair, which he took.

The cottage was exquisitely neat and clean, so was Lucy herself, but she looked worn and anxious, and the detective's quick eyes noted a newspaper on the table, open at an account of the "W—shire murder."

"I am come to speak to you concerning your sister," he began, and was interrupted by Lucy, who clasped her hands together, exclaiming, eagerly,—

"Can you give me any news of Joyce, sir? We are all growing so anxious about her again."

"Then you haven't heard from her since she left after the birth of the baby?"

"No, sir; not a word."

"And don't even know where she is?"

"No."

"She is in W—shire," said Healy, gravely, "and in great trouble over the death of Mr. Gilbert Farquhar—you have read of his murder in the papers?"

"Yes, sir," said Lucy, breathing a deep sigh, "and I couldn't help thinking it was a judgment on him for his wickedness. Ah! people may say what they like about the wicked flourishing, but there comes a time when God visits them with His wrath, and I used to tell Joyce that time would come for Mr. Farquhar."

Her simplicity told the detective all he

wanted to hear, but had not known how to ask. Of course he saw, without any difficulty, that Joyce Weston and Nathalie Egerton's maid were one and the same person, and that Farquhar had been the lover of the latter.

The inference he drew from these facts will be patent to the intelligence of the reader.

"Your sister was treated very badly," he observed, and Lucy exclaimed, warmly,—

"She was indeed, sir! And if you could have seen her before she ran away with Mr. Farquhar, you would have said she was one of the brightest and prettiest girls you ever set eyes on—very different to what she was when she came back."

"She must have hated Farquhar, didn't she?"

"Well, that was the strangest part of it—she loved him and hated him at the same time, and I never could make out which feeling was strongest. When she came home she was dead against him, and as soon as the baby was born her one cry was for him—all her love seemed to come back."

The detective fancied he could trace the phases of feeling through which she had passed. She had gone to London with a view of seeing Farquhar, and then had probably heard of his intended marriage, and, filled with jealous hatred, had answered Nathalie's advertisement, and gone to King's Dene with the intention of working the banker some evil. By means of the spectacles and a different style of dress, she had contrived to disguise herself so as not to risk detection, and then had kept watch on Farquhar's movements.

Healy had no doubt that it was she who had effected an entrance into Nathalie's room, and, under an impulse of jealous rage, tried to stab her in the night, but, baffled in her design, she had henceforward directed her machinations against the banker himself—and with a fatal result.

(To be continued.)



[SHE HEARD HEAVY WHEELS APPROACHING. IT WAS ROBERT.]

NOVELLITE.]

VIOLET LESTER'S VICTORY.

PART I.

THE term was ended and school dismissed. Violet Lester, the teacher, lingered till all were gone. Then she closed the door of the little village school softly and turned the key, in a dazed, unrealising way, as if she left hope behind. And so she did, poor child!

The road was green with June grass and cool with five-o'clock shade. But the girl's small, troubled face, within the depths of her wide straw hat, was hot and flushed as she walked on. She was a small creature, scarce eighteen. And she had an air of failure about her—an air of having always failed, which is the surest promise that one always will fail.

As she walked on the fright and perplexity of her face settled into a grave endurance as she came in sight of the Ashfields' farm, with its comfortable buildings and grassy door-yard, and broad acres in which the crops were ripening under the summer sky. As she opened the gate an hysterical sob rose in her throat, for her weary errand lay here. Here she was to complete the last act in her little drama of defeat. The kitchen door stood open, but still she rapped.

"Come in," said Mrs. Ashfield's voice, mingling with the clink of plates with which she was setting the tea-table.

Violet stepped within, but did not speak at first; for Mrs. Ashfield had turned to the fire, where she stirred some gruel that was simmering in a double kettle. She was a large, prosperous-looking woman, and there was a shadow of impatience on her comely face as she turned to see who was the intruder.

"Oh, is't yon, Violet?" she said, carelessly.

"Yes, ma'am. I came to leave the school key. It has to be left with the trustees when the governess is dismissed."

"Oh, yes. I heard them saying they'd have to get another next term. Couldn't you get on with them?"

"They thought not," said Violet, so drearily, that even the busy woman felt the despair in her tone.

"Well, that was too bad," she said, and turned into the buttery, from whence she emerged shortly with a large brown pitcher brimming with milk in either hand.

"Shall I lay the key on the shelf?" Violet asked.

"Yes, just there by the clock. He'll see it." Violet advanced into the wide, cool room. How cheerful and hospitable the long table looked! At that moment Mrs. Ashfield took the bell from the nail and hurried to the door. Half-past five was tea-time, and she was one minute late. She rang a loud peal. Violet still stood beside the clock-shelf when she returned to the room.

"What was the trouble about the school?" she asked. "I heard say you couldn't get along with some of the big boys."

"I couldn't make them mind," said Violet, chokingly. "But all the big boys'll be out hay making next term. I think they might have let me try once more."

"It's bad for a school to get the name of being unruly. The trustees have to look out for that," said Mrs. Ashfield. "I'm very sorry, for I know you need the place."

Violet was moving slowly towards the door.

"Won't you stay to tea?" asked the trustee's wife, kindly.

Violet Lester paused again. The tone of kindness went through her despairing little soul.

"I don't care about tea, thank you." Then—

"Oh, Mrs. Ashfield, I don't know which way to turn, nor what to do!" she burst out, helplessly.

"Why, bless my soul, child, don't be so discouraged as all that."

The men's voices were heard approaching. But Mrs. Ashfield's practical mind, being once directed to the problems of Violet's difficulties,

pursued the subject after its own practical fashion.

"Isn't Miss Moore willing you should have your board for your help till something else turns up?" she inquired, with some surprise.

"Miss Moore doesn't want me. She says there's enough of them to do all the work they make."

"La me—I do suppose you've got no great faculty for housework. But it's bad for you, all the same."

The men had arrived, and were making free use of the pump-handle, the soap, and long towels.

"Take off your hat, Violet, and sit down to tea. Mary Ann's off visiting this week, and I'll be glad of your help in doing up the dishes. Plenty of room."

Mrs. Ashfield was speaking positively now, and when Mrs. Ashfield spoke positively it generally settled things. She placed an additional chair, and Violet carried her hat to the rack in the hall, and revealed herself as a sandy-haired, small-featured, low-spirited little creature, with round, frightened eyes and awkward, trembling hands.

"Violet Lester called to leave the school-house key, father," Mrs. Ashfield explained, lifting the three-quart teapot as she spoke.

Reuben Ashfield nodded as he took his place at the foot of the table. He had known how it would end when the pressure of pity had driven him into casting his vote, against his convictions, for the fatherless, motherless, penniless girl, whose necessities and the fact that she had written verses on "Autumn Leaves" for the county paper constituted her sole claim to be appointed teacher for the charity school.

"I was saying it seemed quite providential that Violet happened in this evening," continued the mistress of the house. "I've got rather more than one pair of hands and two feet are equal to. I never should have let Mary Ann off, if I had dreamed of that young fellow upstairs getting ill on my hands."

"How is he this afternoon?" inquired Mr. Ashfield.

"He's rather low. Intermittent fever, the doctor says, and this is his bad day."

"Has he said anything about writin' for his friends yet?"

"I broached the subject this morning."

"What did he say?"

"He said he hadn't any friends he wanted to send for, but if we could get a nurse he was able to pay. It makes me think of what your mother used to say 'bout taking in summer lodgers. She used to say she never took one that didn't cost more than he came to."

"It seems to me if he's able to pay for a nurse he'd better have one," said Deben, slowly.

"If you think the young man needs a nurse, father, suppose you find one," replied the wife, tartly. "I'd like to know who in this neighbourhood's going to leave home to nurse a stranger in haymaking time."

The old farmer lifted his keen eyes from under the long grey brows toward the guest.

"Here's Violet Lester," he remarked, "she'd be better a nobody. I should 'n't wonder," he added, "if she was quite a hand in illness. She nursed her grandmother quite a long time before the old lady died."

Mrs. Ashfield smiled grimly. She didn't take kindly to other people's suggestions. Moreover, her private estimate of Violet Lester's capacities in any direction was low. Thriftlessness ran in the Lester blood. The allusion to Violet's grandmother caused Mrs. Ashfield to remember that the old lady had been imprudent enough to live on till she was eighty, and so had spent the last cent of the little property which would have sufficed to give Violet a start in the world.

Mrs. Ashfield, however, was too wise a woman to reject the proposal outright. Violet would, no doubt, stay for her board. It was the beginning of haymaking—busiest time of the year. Mary Ann's return was a little uncertain. And a sick man was to be waited on upstairs. Mrs. Ashfield had got thus far in her argument in Violet's favour, when something occurred which gave an entirely new direction to her thoughts. This was the entrance of her eldest son, who had been delayed a little behind the rest.

Robert Ashfield was twenty-two, strong-built, broad-shouldered, his mother's own boy—with the same "set" expression about the corners of his mouth. He was, of course, unaware of Violet's presence, but his eyes fastened upon her as he entered the kitchen door. He coloured with surprise, pulled himself up hastily, and catching his mother's eye, came forward rather awkwardly, and took his place at table opposite the young girl.

Violet had heard his step before she saw him, and had seen him before he saw her. She had composed herself, looking gravely at her plate, from which she did not lift her eyes till the young man said with an effort—

"How'd do, Violet?"

She nodded then; without any words, but the brief glance she gave him was very significant.

Mrs. Ashfield saw all—the glance and its significance. She remembered to have heard some joking about Robert having a liking for Violet. It gave her a sense of oppression. Her Robert to fancy this insignificant little girl, who was notoriously inefficient about housework, and had just proved her inability to even be governess to a charity school! Mrs. Ashfield looked forward to different things from these for her boy. He had the best prospects of any young man in the town. He was a fine fellow every way. His wife, when she came, must bring a little money, or at least capacity to run the Ashfield kitchen according to its traditions. So said his mother.

"Have the holidays began?" Robert asked, by-and-by, not realising how little attention he was paying to his tea.

"Yes." A pause, broken by the clatter of knives and forks around the table and some-

body's request for the brown bread. "I suppose you knew I couldn't get on with them?" the girl added.

"I'd like to take it out of some of those boys who made the trouble," said Robert, frowning.

"They weren't so much to blame," said Violet, softly. "I'm so little they didn't feel afraid of me."

"Are you going down to the village to-night?" from Robert, after another pause.

Mrs. Ashfield spoke up briskly: "Violet'll stay till morning." She didn't mean to have Robert talking home with her after dark, because of any invitation she had extended. And she made a rapid estimate that Violet wouldn't be at the farm-house very soon again through any fault of her. Mrs. Ashfield proposed, but Fate disposed.

They were rising from the table. Robert passed round by the young girl.

"We'll have a song after the work's done."

Violet nodded, with a half-smile. That was the greatest pleasure she had ever known—singing with Robert Ashfield. She had, it may be said, a very sweet voice of her own.

Mrs. Ashfield had stepped into the buttery as these words were exchanged. She emerged with a bowl, into which she poured the gruel from the scones on the table.

"Now, Violet," she said, "if you'll carry this up to the spare chamber to Mr. Penfold, it'll save my steps. He's a young man I took in for a few weeks, you know," she explained.

"He was writin' and drawing pictures and goin' on, and yesterday he was taken ill—lay stupid-like all day. We got the doctor this morning early, and he says it's likely to be a slow fever. Nothin' catchin', but mighty stubborn, as them low fevers be." She was wiping the rim of the bowl and selecting a spoon of glittering brightness while she spoke. A strange step outside attracted her attention.

"Why, here's Doctor Pilford again," she said. "I didn't know as we'd see you again to-day, doctor."

"I was passing this way, and I thought I'd look in at my patient," he replied, nodding.

"He's a high-strung, nervous sort of subject—I'll bear looking after."

The doctor passed on up the stairs, while Violet followed him, beating the bowl.

He came down ten minutes later, and entered the kitchen. He look rather grave.

"It won't answer to leave Mr. Penfold alone," he said. "He must have his medicine regularly, and he ought to have ice kept on his head to-night. I've asked Violet Lester if she couldn't take care of him for a while—she was used to being up at night with her grandmother—I think she might do it."

Mrs. Ashfield was not a woman to waste words, so she wasted none now. She made a sign of assent to the doctor's proposition, as she piled up the tea-things, and was conscious in a vague way of circumstances being stronger for once than her will.

Midsummer came and went. Haymaking and harvesting kept Farmer Ashfield, his son, and the labourers at work from dawn till sundown; and indoors, Mrs. Ashfield, with her strong hand on the helm, kept Mary Ann and the clockwork wheels in motion.

Violet stayed on, and up in the spare chamber there were forces at work which were beyond Mrs. Ashfield's power to help or hinder.

Douglas Penfold lay for long weeks wasting with slow fever. The plain country doctor did his best for him; some of the men-folks lent their strength when that was needed; Mrs. Ashfield made jellies and broth—and rather expeditious in the chance to do "sick-room cookery," which the sanitary condition of her family had not permitted, hitherto, for years. And Violet Lester nursed the handsome stranger with the same conscientious serenity with which she had nursed her grandmother.

But all things end somehow, and Douglas Penfold was ending by getting well. He sat by the open window one late August morning, thin and peevish and pale.

"I don't remember seeing you till after I got ill," he remarked to Violet, who was putting the room "to rights."

"I wasn't here before that."

"Where were you?"

"I was governess at the school."

"And you gave it up to come and take care of me. That was very good of you. I shall never forget the misery of those twenty hours when I lay alone. When the doctor brought you into the room with the bowl of gruel, and said you were used to sickness, and that you would stay with me, I felt grateful—and I'm not naturally of a grateful disposition."

"You've no need of being grateful to me. I had nothing better to do than to take care of you."

"Is that so? I thought now—"

Mr. Penfold did not finish saying what he thought. Violet had paused in her work, and was looking at him earnestly. She had grown during those summer weeks—grown round and fair. Douglas Penfold, who was a professional critic of humanity—a journalist by trade—saw that some new thought was shewing itself within her brain. He looked at her with interest. She was a quaint little specimen. He wasn't sure but that there was a good deal of repressed ability under her shy, pious way. With a convalescent's yearning for amusement he tried to draw her out.

When she had got to that point in her confidences that she said, "I haven't any home or any friends, Mr. Penfold," he answered gaily, "Well, Violet, that's my case exactly."

"Tien! so hard for a man," she said.

"My dear girl, it's ten times worse. A woman gets favoured—nobody shuts the door on a woman. But a man whose work isn't worth his salt—you may pity him—that's all."

"Isn't your work worth your salt?" asked Violet, serious and literal.

He laughed a little.

"You think I've had a good deal of salt in all my gruel. Well, I hope I can pay for it. But I'm not sure I can pay you."

"Mr. Penfold"—Violet looked straight into his face with her earnest eyes—"if you want to do anything for me, may I tell you what to do—help me to get away from here?"

"To get away from here?" he repeated. "Why, my child, I can't get away from here myself. Does anybody prevent your getting away?" he added, with a sort of interest.

"Please don't make fun of me." She came and stood before him, folding her hands like a child, and looking so young and confident of his power, that Douglas Penfold's weary, worldly soul had a certain fresh sensation that he liked to feel. "I've thought this all over," Violet went on. "I've meant to speak to you as soon as you were able to listen. Nobody wants me here. I can't do anything to suit them. But there's something in me—I know there is—that some one would care for. I can write very neatly, and keep accounts. I could assist in a shop. But I've no way in the world to get to a city. I should have no one to speak a word for me if I did. Please, Mr. Penfold, let me go with you. I will pay you back—every farthing. If you will find a place—some very cheap place—where I can stay, and then help me about advertising, and speak for my character—"

Douglas Penfold held up his thin, white hand in utter dismay.

"My poor child, you would need to find someone to speak for my character first! What unlucky spirit ever put such a thought in your head as that I was a fit guardian for such sweet simplicity as yourself? No, Violet, I shall not forget your kindness—I shall not let it go unpaid—but once for all put it out of your head that I can help you in any other way."

"I could not start out all alone," she said, vaguely.

"You might better than to start out with me," he retorted, impulsively. Then he added, more seriously, "It is very true you could not start out alone. Never dream of it."

Why, Violet?" after a second pause—"when I sat at my window last evening in the twilight, while you were singing on the doorstep, I saw the son and heir of the family sitting beside you. And—I am counted sharp about such things—it looked to me as if it was all settled, as if the last thing you had in that silly little head of yours was a notion of flight."

Violet Lester listened to these words with a revulsion of feeling that transformed her. The blue eyes flashed sudden flames. Her pretty mouth curled with scorn; the white throat swelled.

"You do not understand me any better than the rest of them," she said, indignantly. "I will never put myself in any home where I'm not wanted," she added, hotly.

Douglas Penfold looked after her as she left the room, and thought that if he were strong again—feeling like himself—he might have enjoyed this unique little *protégée*; and he began to wonder vaguely whether among the people he had accommodated in one way or another there might not be some one who would find a comfortable berth for this fledgling who had been really very good and kind to him.

"I thought that great hobbledoy, Robert, was after her, and really she could never do better than to settle herself on this prosperous farm," was his mental comment. He sat silent and reflective in the drowsy summer air. At the end of twenty minutes he put his reverie into words. "She is a unique sort of creature when you come to think her over. I shouldn't want to pledge my word as to what a new environment might make of her." And then he composed himself for a nap.

He got well rapidly, strengthening on milk, fresh eggs, and chicken broth. The day was fixed for his departure, and after he had settled his bill his hostess was fain to admit that it came to more than he had cost, though to be sure she had not counted her trouble.

"Well, Violet, I am going to leave you," he said, unable to conceal his own satisfaction, as he waited on the doorstep for Robert and the trap to drive round, "but I shall never forget you."

Violet stood calm before him. Somehow she touched his jaded taste more and more.

"Shall I ever hear from you, Mr. Penfold?" she asked, simply.

It had been Douglas Penfold's business to study types. He had pursued various lines of intellectual activity; he had cultivated the sympathetic side of his nature. He discerned something in Violet which was not commonplace. Analogy suggested a pinched bud that might still unfold into a glowing flower in a more propitious air. He took her hand kindly within his, which were still thin and cool.

"Violet, I would be glad to serve you. I will keep you in mind. I have not much influence myself, but I have friends who have. I will inquire about a clerkship under Government. I feel sure you could easily pass the necessary examinations. I have a friend—for that matter a brother-in-law—"

The excitement in Violet's face was intense. "Oh, Mr. Penfold, you will do that—you won't forget."

"No, I will not forget." He was alarmed at the encouragement she took from his words, and he hastened to add, "But you must not be disappointed if nothing comes of it; for I remember there's great demand for these places. Still, I'll speak my word for you, for what you've done for me."

Robert was coming. Mr. Penfold tried to disengage his hand with a good-bye pressure. But Violet clung to him excitedly.

"When shall I hear?" "I will write to you," Penfold was sympathetic. Violet's agitation touched him. He spoke with more assurance than he really intended.

"Within a month," he said. Robert was drawing up before the door. "Good-bye, Mrs. Ashfield. I shall never

forget your kindness. Good-bye, Violet—within a month if at all."

He spoke the last words in a low tone. It was a crisis in Violet's life. She rose unconsciously to the occasion. She looked tall, fair, strong—a transfiguration from the Violet of yesterday.

"I shall wait," she said, calmly. Penfold carried her look away with him. It went with him whether or no.

It was the last day of the month following Douglas Penfold's departure from the farm, and it was the end of September. During this time Violet had remained with the Ashfields, without any sort of understanding on either side as to why she did so. Nevertheless there were reasons which justified her stay. There was extra housecleaning, owing to Mr. Penfold's illness, and also it was pickling and preserving time. Moreover, Mary Ann took a week's holiday. And then Mrs. Ashfield had an ill turn of a few days—an unprecedented thing. All these were perhaps sufficient reasons for making Violet Lester feel quite welcome to stop with the Ashfields. But there was even another. She had positively nowhere to go. And she lingered on, hoping feverishly that each day would bring the longed-for letter from Mr. Penfold, and going to bed every night sick with hope deferred. Perhaps but for one thing Mrs. Ashfield would not have endured her prolonged stay. But Violet, whether from shyness or from pride, was "offish" with Robert—very "offish."

Still Robert seemed content. He was happy in her mere presence. He had a dull conviction of his mother's opposition, which he believed a better acquaintance with his sweet-heart would remove. And then, like other men, he did not fully understand the feeling of his own heart, while the object of his attachment seemed within such easy reach. So the tide moved on, not diminishing and not strengthening the resistance which the mother felt.

"How'd you like the notion of a daughter-in-law, mum?" asked Mary Ann, on the morning of the golden-hued day with which the month ended. She was making pastry on the slab beside the window, from which she looked off into the orchard where Violet and Robert were picking and sorting the pale yellow pippins.

Mrs. Ashfield had just set her currant jelly next the fire, and was watching it critically, as the case required. She answered, rather tartly,—

"I suppose my son 'll be the means of bringing me a daughter some time."

"At some time not far distant, I think," continued Mary Ann, who was herself a mature maiden of thirty-five. She received no response, but that did not forbid her adding, "I suppose you'd be perfectly suited with Violet, or of course you wouldn't have brought her into your family so. It was flying in the face of Providence, unless, as I say, you're perfectly suited."

Mrs. Ashfield was wincing in every nerve.

"Robert likes Violet just as if she were a sister. I don't think there's anything serious." But she lifted the porcelain kettle to the back part of the stove, and darted a long, anxious look towards the orchard.

The smothered resistance returned with added force. She could not endure the thought of shiftless little Violet Lester as Robert's wife, and Mary Ann knew it. That Violet had been growing plump and pretty and light-hearted all those summer days, that she sang like a bird, that she was doted with her needle, and could give herself a coquettish little air of fashion. All that was a poor recommendation in Mrs. Ashfield's eyes. Poor Violet had no faculty to turn off work.

Mrs. Ashfield was never hasty; but she felt at last that the time had come to do her duty. She thought of the evening. She was prepared to relieve her conscience.

The men had gone to Southford Market with their apples that afternoon, and were

not yet returned. Mary Ann had gone down to the village. Mrs. Ashfield and Violet were alone.

"Well, Violet, the summer is ended," she remarked, as she lighted the sitting-room lamp and took up her knitting. "I suppose you'll soon be thinking about your plans for the winter?"

"I have thought about them a good deal," said Violet. "It seems to me there is no work for me here."

"Certainly not in my family, Violet. You've been a help to us, of course, since you came, but the season's work is done, and of course every extra person makes some extra trouble now."

She was even more outspoken than was necessary.

"I understand that," said Violet, humbly. "I am hoping to hear of something within a week. Will it put you out if I stay another week, Mrs. Ashfield?"

Mrs. Ashfield hesitated before she said,— "I don't understand, of course, what you may be expecting to hear of." She had an uneasy notion that it might be something which Robert would communicate. "I'd thought of asking Mary Ann's sister to come over and help. We should want your room."

Violet turned so that the shadow covered her more completely.

"I'll go down to Miss Moore's, then," she said, quietly. "I daresay she can have me for a time."

Mrs. Ashfield did not reply. She knew she was unkind; but she felt sure she must be firm in order to get rid of her dangerous guest.

After a few minutes Violet left the room. She wrapped a shawl over her head, and went out of doors into the frosty starlight. Once more she walked along the road that lay between the farm and the school. Truly, she faced a frowning world.

The month was up, and Douglas Penfold had not written. Not a way seemed to open. The poor child wished she were dead. She felt, to be sure, some power for action, much capacity for enjoyment; but where to turn and how!

She sat down on a log by the roadside. Mrs. Ashfield had hurt her more than she had meant to. The girl thought she could never, never go back to the house again. She heard heavy wheels approaching—it was Robert.

"Hallo!" he said to the crouched figure at the roadside. "Why, Violet"—approaching closer—"what on earth are you doing out here in the cold?"

She shivered, and did not answer.

"I declare," said the young man, laughingly, "I believe you came out to meet me."

"No," said Violet, in dismay, "I—I"—she hardly knew what she was saying—"I came because your mother doesn't want me any longer, and—and—"

"Violet," said Robert, "I want you, if mother doesn't. So now! And I've been trying for a fortnight to get a chance to tell you so."

"Please don't talk so. I am going down to Miss Moore's. Your mother wants my room."

"Booh!" said Robert, with more emphasis than elegance. "Violet, I'm no great talker, but perhaps I can make you understand that I like you better'n any girl I ever saw; and if you like me we'll get married. Then mother 'll have to find some other room for what she wants."

Violet shook her head. "I wouldn't go where I wasn't wanted. I wouldn't be a burden to anybody. I know I'm a no-account sort of girl. I must go and find out how to be somebody."

"I like you just as you are, Violet," said the young man in a low tone. "And if we suit each other, that's all that's needed."

He tried to take her hand under the shawl; but she drew back.

"I couldn't let anybody take me out of pity. I think too much of myself for that," she said.

"There's no pity about it," he persisted; "it's—it's not at all like pity what I feel, Violet; and if the old house isn't big enough for my mother and my wife—"

"Hush!" said Violet, "some one is coming."

In fact some one had come close upon them—a no less interested person than Mary Ann. "Pretty sharp air for sparkin'," she chuckled. "I see you, and I'm all out'n breath trying to catch up. What do you suppose I found for you down in the village, Violet?"

"For me?"

"Yes, you of all people! A letter—a great square-shaped, white letter sealed with wax. And, what's more, I bet I can tell you who it's from."

"Did you bring it?" gasped Violet.

"Of course I did. D'ye think I'd leave it lying in the post-office?"

"Let me have it, please."

"Oh, it's safe in my pocket, along with the nutmegs, and the cotton, and what not. I can't overhaul till we get into the light. But I'll tell you who it's from—Mr. Penfold."

A quick, fierce, backward glance from Robert caused another chuckle from Mary Ann.

Violet only clasped the little cold hands which held the shawl under her chin tight—tight with gratitude.

The letter was indeed from Douglas Penfold. Strange to say, he had not forgotten his little nurse, nor his promise to her. Stranger still he had been successful in finding that an examination was just pending for the department in which his brother-in-law had interest.

"You see your nose is out of joint, Robert," was Mary Ann's malicious comment when the news of Violet's chance of an appointment was made known in the household. "You don't suppose he's got a place for Violet down there without he wants to see her again, do you?"

"Mr. Penfold doesn't live in London," said Robert, lightly.

"He'll find the way there when Violet's in the post-office," was the rasping reply.

Violet's new circumstances abated Mrs. Ashfield's anxiety. She set to work heartily to prepare Violet for her journey. And on a soft October day Robert and Violet—the former very grave and "set," the latter very bright and dainty in her new grey suit—set off for Southford, where the girl was to take the train for her long journey.

"I'm not going to bother you now talking about things you don't want to hear of, Violet," said the young man, as they drove on; "but I want to ask you if anything ever comes about that makes you want me—I'll ask you to promise to let me know."

"Robert, I'll never forget what you proposed when—I had nowhere in the world to turn."

"My offer stands good, Violet."

"Don't say that because—"

"Because you think you'll like the folks up there better'n you like us. But I ain't sure. I don't believe you'll forget me."

"I'm sure I sha'n't forget."

"Violet, I've always been 'set' in my ways. Now I'm 'set' on you. I might as well tell plainly that I'm not going to give you up. I'm going to live for you and work for you. When my heifers are sold next spring I'll say that's Violet's money, and I'll put it in the bank. And when the honey's sold I'll do the same. And instead of trifling away my share of the farm profits I'll just lay them aside, too. And when there's enough to build a new-fangled little house over on the east side of the road and to make it all comfortable, then I'm coming up to London, and I'm going to say, 'Violet Lester, would you rather come home and be Violet Ashfield, or stay out to civil service?'"

Two big tears rolled from Violet's eyes on to her new lisle-thread gloves. She had not been sure hitherto that she had any feeling

but gratitude toward Robert. But while he was speaking she felt in advance the dreariness and loneliness of her new life. She had an aching longing to hide her head on Robert's broad shoulder and cry over the parting. But she did not do it. She had to face a frowning world first, to measure herself against it, to find out what it was that made her lips tremble and her heart beat so fast when Robert hastily deposited the shawl-strap, the big bunch of "china asters," and the lunch-basket packed for the journey, on the rack over the seat of the crowded carriage, and said, awkwardly enough:—

"Take care of yourself, Violet."

The guard shouted, "Stand away there." The train moved on. Robert was holding the mare's head, and did not see the frightened little face that pressed close against the window, as it shot on farther and farther from the platform, from the familiar Southford and the road by which Robert was returning to the farm.

PART II.

It was not a very difficult examination which Violet had been called upon to pass, and she got an easy berth in the Savings Bank. There was hardly any danger that even she could fail in it. The other lady clerks laughed at her anxieties about giving satisfaction; laughed at her primitive bewilderment, at the country cut of her grey dress. At the end of the first week she had been persuaded to cut her thick reddish hair in a "bang" that met her brows. At the end of a month her freckles had disappeared, and her pretty hands were soft and white. When the first month's salary was paid she bought a ready-made costume and silver bangles.

"I believe the little one is going to turn out a beauty," remarked one of her fellow-lodgers. "Yes; she's given up moping for the lover she's left behind her."

"Did she leave a lover behind her?"

"Why, of course. They always do. But they leave them for good and all."

One afternoon—it was toward the end of the winter—as Violet came down the steps of her department she saw a familiar face—the first since leaving Southford, nearly five months before. She was so well identified with her present life that this reminder of her past gave her something like a shock. But she ran forward eagerly.

"Mr. Penfold, I thought you meant never to let me see you again."

He smiled back upon the brilliant little person who accosted him.

"How do you do, Miss Lester?"

"I am glad to have a chance to thank you at last."

"Oh, you owe me no thanks. My brother-in-law—"

"I have not yet seen him, either—"

"No. It's all right. He's been away."

"Have you come to London to stay?"

"For a few weeks—yes."

"And shall I see you sometimes?"

"Oh, certainly. Tell me how you are enjoying yourself."

"I don't believe I could tell you if I tried! Oh, what a miserable, forlorn little creature I was! And you saved me—put me into this new atmosphere. Yet you say I owe you no thanks!"

They were standing at the foot of the marble steps, on the broad pavement. Violet well rounded, with a brilliant colour and a certain distinguished air of her own, was looking up eagerly into the fastidious face of the elegant man before her.

As she uttered these last words, a middle-aged woman with grey hair, and large diamonds in her ears, passed and bowed to Mr. Penfold, who lifted his hat deferentially.

"Would you like to go to the theatre this evening, Violet?" he asked, as if the lady's bow had reminded him of something.

"The theatre—with you! Oh, Mr. Penfold, that is too kind of you."

"I must go now; I will call for you at half-past seven," and he took his departure rather abruptly.

Violet did not notice this, nor did she see that a turning beyond the marble steps he had joined the grey-haired lady to whom he had bowed.

Her little head was in a whirl. Her prospects seemed too brilliant to be borne with calmness.

"I am going to the theatre with Mrs. Penfold," she told her particular "chum," and who lodged with her, sharing her little bedroom, and so enabling them to have a little sitting-room as well. "Won't you lend me your silver earrings?"

"Douglas Penfold," said the young woman, turning her trinket-box bottom-side up before Violet. "Yes, I know him. He's here awhile every winter. He writes newspaper letters. I shouldn't wonder if he was writing a book."

"'Twas owing to him I got my place in the department."

"You don't say so! I didn't know he had any influence. He's well connected. But—"

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing. Go and enjoy yourself. Our lives are monotonous enough. We can't be over-particular how we get a little pleasure."

"I am particular," said Violet, rather fiercely. "But Mr. Penfold is an old friend. I am sure it's perfectly proper for me to go with him."

"Why, of course it is," with some covert irony. "Who said anything to the contrary?"

Violet's friend lent one or another of her trinkets very often after that, to complete Violet's toilet for the theatre. Then sometimes Violet had a bunch of violets in her dress-front as she sat at her desk. Often she was in a feverish hurry for the hour of dismissal; and when she came in late to tea, red-lipped and dewy-eyed, she said she had had such a nice walk with a friend who called for her. And her companion whispered to the rest that Violet's "friend" was that "fearful swell, Douglas Penfold."

But just as the May-days grew a little oppressive with heat the violets failed, and Violet no more borrowed the trinkets, nor took afternoon walks. Mr. Penfold had gone.

He came back, however, the following season—earlier than the last. Violet found him waiting at the foot of the steps one winter afternoon—just as it happened before.

"I suppose you hear from the Ashfields sometimes?" he said, casually, as he walked by her side.

"Not often. They don't care much for such things as I have to write about."

"Indeed!"

"And then I am busy."

"What did you do in summer—in the holidays?"

Violet coloured as she said,—

"I took your advice. I read several books."

"My advice is evidently good for you. You have improved."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, immensely. You were a little 'loud.' That has all gone by. You are really exquisite. You don't know how much interest I take in—in your evolution."

Violet laughed, though she did not know just what either Douglas Penfold or his big word meant. But she fully understood that he found her agreeable. He left her in no doubt of that. Last winter's experiences begun again. Five o'clock walks, rosebuds, evenings at the theatre.

Violet herself grew a little uneasy at last at the progress of the intimacy. Sometimes in her sober moments she realised that Douglas Penfold should not say the things and look the things he said and looked to her, unless he was her lover.

"Mr. Penfold, I am afraid I'm going with you too much, under the circumstances," she said, valiantly, one Saturday evening, after a week of excessive attention on his part.

"There's no doubt of it, Violet," with the

long, soft glance from his dark eyes which had become so familiar. He paused a moment, looking down and up again. "So you know about the 'circumstances?'" he remarked.

"I mean that we are not related. And—"

"And that a man who, like myself, is on the eve of marriage, has no right to be flirting with anyone but a relation?" Mr. Penfold interposed.

Violet turned white, red, and white again. "Ah! I see you didn't know, little one. But it is true. In Easter week I shall offer myself on the altar of matrimony. Miss Murray has a hundred thousand in her own right. I expect to be very happy," stroking his moustache.

Violet gazed dumbly at the speaker. Then a tide of passionate indignation swept over her soul, and she burst into tears of shamed and injured feelings.

"How dare you amuse yourself so deliberately with me, while you were courting another woman? I would not have believed that you could be so mean!"

They were in an alcove in the South Kensington Museum. Penfold laid his hand warningly on her arm.

"Pray don't make a scene. I shall have to leave you if attention is attracted. Violet, don't you think I had some little claim upon you? I have been interested in watching how you would turn out. You know it's my business to study types. I persisted in getting this place for you just to have an opportunity of observing how you would adjust yourself."

Violet Lester listened quietly enough, but without comprehension. Penfold went on,—

"I've courted Miss Murray for two years. One day her mother—I did not know she was in London at the time—met me talking to you. It nearly upset my calculations. But I smoothed it over. I've kept you out of the Murray orbit since."

"Then you were ashamed to be seen with me?"

"My dear girl, don't you understand? I marry a hundred thousand pounds, but I still need some relaxation. Your nature is a problem that attracts me. Violet, is there anything in me that attracts you?"

Violet Lester rose. Her blue eyes flashed, her red lips quivered.

"There's something in you that would attract me to give you a horsewhipping if I saw the way clear," she said, in a low, angry tone.

"Bravo!" said Penfold, with a sinister smile, standing beside her. "You've a real talent for a scene. But—wasn't that rather coarse?"

It was one day a few months later than this—in fact, in June, on the eve of the harvesting season—that Violet was called down from her desk one day to see a gentleman—who could not wait. It was Robert Ashfield who, almost as much as Violet herself, had changed during these two years—had grown manly and self-assured.

"I said, Violet, I should come to ask you that question some time, and I have come. You won't mind—when you know all—that I ask it abruptly," he said, as their hands touched.

Languid and suffering with the intense heat, his presence seemed to Violet like the bracing air from the mountains and the woods.

"I am glad you came," she said, simply.

"Mother is ill," he continued. "Not very bad, but still in bed. And she has wished for you. She said, 'It seems to me if Violet were here, I could get well.' She added, 'I can't tell what makes me long for her so.' This is what I came to tell you."

"I will go home with you, Robert."

The young man looked earnestly into the changed face.

"Not"—he stammered—"not unless you are willing to go for my sake as well as mother's."

In the shadow of the vestibule she put her little hands impulsively in his.

"Oh, Robert, do you want me still?"

"More than ever, Violet." He drew her to him, for a second only.

"I know myself now, Robert. I want you."

Violet wrote and sent in her resignation as clerk in the department that same day.

She carried some few traces of her civil service back to Southford, but time and happiness effaced them by degrees. And Mrs. Ashfield is never tired of mentioning that her son's wife earned the money for the new furniture which graced the wedding.

[THE END.]

THE COMMON MUSHROOM.

THE common edible mushroom grows in short, rich pastures, and, as a rule, nowhere else. It has a very pleasant odour, and may be readily distinguished from all other agarics by the following characters, the chief parts being the cap, or top, and stem:—

The cap is very seldom more than three or four inches in diameter, and its inner substance is white or slightly pink, moderately firm, and never thin, brittle or watery.

The top of the cap is white, whiteish, or pale brown or buff, dry, and slightly flocculose, never smooth, never viscid. The covering of skin of the top depends from the edge as a narrow, regular frill, and if this frill-like edge be taken between the finger and thumb, the top of the mushroom can be entirely peeled.

The gills underneath the cap are at first rose-colour, then purple-brown, at length almost black; they are never permanently rose-colour or white, and never black in a young state. The gills never actually touch the stem.

The stem is generally about three inches high, neither solid nor hollow, but lightly stuffed up the middle with a somewhat loose pith. The stem is furnished with a ring round its middle, which becomes ragged with age.

The dust-like spores or seed-like bodies which fall from the gills are purple brown, or almost (never quite) black in colour.

Strange to say, the popular name of the common edible agaric is everywhere "the meadow mushroom" and "the mushroom of our meadows," whereas, as a rule, the mushroom never grows in true meadows, where grass is grown for hay, but in short, rich pastures, and on flat downs, where the grass is continually eaten off by animals. The strong growth of high meadow grass would be fatal to the growth of the true mushroom.

GIVE WORKING-WOMEN FAIR PLAY.

THEY tell me that there is an effort being made to exclude women from factories, on the ground that there is not work enough for both sexes.

If this is true, more is the pity. But why should the whole burden fall on the weakest shoulders?

Why should John feel more deeply wronged because Jane has work he would like to have than because James has it?

It is utterly absurd to say that women only buy finery with their wages while men support families. It is a manifest fact to every observer that no woman ever earned a dollar by hard work without finding somebody—often a man—who wanted at least half of it as soon as she got it in her hand.

There are widows with children, daughters with aged parents, wives with invalid or unlucky husbands, and little girls who "help mother" feed the others, at work in all the factories. A man with a large family has a hard time, of course; but so has a woman with a large family. And if there are some

girls who having homes, can do as they please with their earnings, there are many men, unmarried, and not living with parents, who spend the greater part of their wages in the most selfish way entirely on themselves, and others who drink and smoke their money all away.

Take work from women, and do you suppose every honest young factory employé will instantly marry a respectable ex-working girl out of pure philanthropy? Kissing will always go by favour, as it always has, and men will always marry girls they fall in love with, or live single lives, if they like, until they die. On the whole a single woman, being naturally more unselfish, and more apt to have a local habitation, than a single man, will have ten chances to his one of spreading her money over the bread-and-butter of several people. If too many poor cousins turn up, he can take refuge afar; she stays where her home is, and helps keep the family together.

It does not seem to me possible that there are many men who approve of driving women from fields of labour which they have always occupied, and I do not think the few who wish it can succeed. There are vast numbers of women who must work or starve to death, and it occurs to me that men who can at least become sailors or soldiers should be ashamed to wrench the hands of women from the work that they can do in factories.

ANTIQUITY OF TEA.

VARIOUS writers have made conjectures with respect to the time and manner of the discovery by the Chinese themselves of the properties and uses of tea; but, as with most questions respecting the history of China, all is vague and unsatisfactory.

A passage has been quoted from an ancient work, entitled, "Periplus of the Erythræan Sea" (the Red Sea, or Arabian Gulf), which Vossius Vincent and other writers have regarded as relating to the betel nut; but which Rhind, in his "Vegetable Kingdom," recites as descriptive of the tea plant and its cultivators, eighteen centuries ago:—

"There used to come yearly to the frontier of the Sinae (a people inhabiting the southernmost part of Asia, supposed to be the same as the Cochinchinese), a certain people called Seseate, with a short body, broad forehead, flat noses, and of a wild aspect. They came with their wives and children, bearing large mats full of leaves, resembling those of the vine. When they have arrived on the frontier of the country of the Sinae, they stop and spend a few days in festivity, using the mats for lying upon; they then return to the abode of their countrymen in the interior. The Sinae next repair to the place, and take up the articles which they left; and having drawn out stalks and fibres, they nicely double the leaves, make them into a circular shape, and thrust into them the fibres of the seeds. Thus three kinds of *malabathrum* are formed; designated as the larger leaf, the middling one and the smaller."

The fact that any reliance has been placed upon this statement, for the purpose of proving that tea was known to the Greeks or Romans in the first century, but serves to show how destitute the civilised world was of all knowledge of it prior to the era of its introduction in the seventeenth century.

Tea was little known in Europe until the middle of the seventeenth century. Mr. Pops, Secretary of the British Admiralty, in 1661, speaks of "tea (a China drink), of which," he says, "I had never drank before." Three years later, the Dutch East India Company presented two pounds and two ounces to the King of England, as a rare and valuable offering; and, in 1667, this company, by the importation of one hundred pounds, commenced a traffic that has grown to the magnitude of thirty million pounds for home consumption alone in England.

ALL AMONG THE HEATHER.

CHAPTER XXV.

PERRAN DOES HER DUTY.

THREE weeks went by, quietly and almost uneventfully, and Elsie's love for Trebartha Castle and the immediate neighbourhood was so great, that she felt as if she could never be quite happy if she had to go away and knew she would not come back again.

Clarence Maltby went away the morning after Elsie refused him, but he returned a couple of days before Christmas, and he looked and talked and behaved generally as though nothing unusual had occurred.

Elsie, who on meeting him again had at first felt a little awkward, soon found herself talking to him as though nothing unpleasant had happened, though she was a little amused to observe that the young man seemed to consider that he had put himself quite right with her, and she had no longer any cause for being cool with him since he had made her an honourable offer of marriage.

That his offer had been declined did not seem to weigh heavily upon his mind; but then Elsie did not know that he carried in his pocket a licence and a ring, both of which had been procured for what some people might have considered her sole benefit.

The Christmas festivities were by no means on a large scale at Trebartha Castle this year, but as Elsie's Christmas-day had hitherto been spent at school, the present manner of honouring the anniversary was a great improvement on her past experience.

It was on the last night of the old year that Nan Perran, who had seemed more eccentric of late than usual, whispered mysteriously in Elsie's ear,—

"I'm coming to your room to speak to you to-night; leave the door on the latch, or she will hear me!"

Then the woman hurried away without waiting to be questioned.

Elsie's curiosity about the Lady Trebartha, whose portrait she so much resembled, had by no means abated, but she had found no means of gratifying it.

Tamzen either could not, or would not enlighten her, and she had no opportunity of asking a question of anyone else.

There was an old woman living in Trebartha Cove, whose name likewise was Perran, and Elsie felt so much attracted to her that she tried to make her acquaintance. But though Alice Perran was usually sociable enough with strangers, she shunned the fair-haired girl who was never out of the castle walls alone, and who had usually Clarence Maltby as well as Tamzen with her.

Clarence would willingly have dispensed with the presence of the maid-servant, and he suggested several times that there was no need for her to accompany them; but Elsie was of a different opinion, and when it came to be discussed, she flatly refused to accept Mr. Maltby as her sole escort.

This resolve on her part delayed the execution of the plot of which she was to be the victim, for Tamzen was jealous, and, from very different motives, was as eager to keep close to Elsie as the latter was to have her by her side; the consequence being that Maltby was unable to indulge in any sentiment, even if he had been bold enough otherwise to do so.

This matter stood on New Year's Eve, and Elsie, having said good-night to Mrs. Penfold, had retired to her own room for the night, but, acting upon Perran's suggestion, she did not lock her door on the inside.

A large fire was burning in the grate, and she sat very close to it, keeping her feet warm, while she listened to the sound of the sea—a sound that never ceased—and to the howling of the wind, that was almost incessant.

She was wondering about many things. What could Perran be going to tell her? Why did not Charlie Birch send her luggage,

or make any response to her letter? and why had not Lionel Denison given any sign of the great interest which he had seemed to take in her?

Her dress was of dark sage-green velvet, one of those which Mrs. Penfold had bought in Exeter, and she had some wide creamy lace at the neck and arms, which gave a quaint and somewhat old-fashioned appearance to her lovely face and figure.

To-night she was more like the picture in the library than usual, and Perran's face changed colour on seeing her when she silently came into the room and noiselessly closed the door behind her.

"You want to tell me something, Perran?" asked Elsie, looking up at the strange, dark face of the lady's-maid.

"Yes, my lady," was the involuntary answer, followed, a moment after, by an apology and a "yes, miss."

"Take a seat," said the girl, pointing to a chair near her own by the fire.

The woman did as she was bidden, and the fitful firelight shone upon her face, making it appear at times grotesque, and at others forbidding.

She was a reserved, silent woman at all times, and now she seemed positively tongue-tied, as she sat with her body bent towards the fire, nursing her knees with her clasped hands.

Elsie watched her intently, but she did not break the silence; she rightly judged that Perran was best left to herself.

"It's the hand of Providence that brought you here!" the strange creature at length said. "We thought that my sister, Quin Perran, had jumped into the sea with you out of revenge, and that we'd none of us ever see your face again."

She paused, and what she had said rather tended to mystify than to enlighten Elsie.

Still she asked no questions, and the silence had a beneficial effect upon Perran, for when she spoke again she was more clear in her statement.

"My sister, Quin Perran, was mazed like; the folks called her daff, but she'd been ill-used when she was a girl. Your grandfather was a wild, bad man; whose will was a law to himself, and he came between Quin and her sweetheart, Dan, and Quin was ruined, and Dan was drowned."

"It's an old story. Sir Richard Trebartha was a powerful man, and my poor sister was not the only one that he wronged; but the day of retribution came, and a few months after his son and heir was born, a dead baby was found in its place! The fraud was soon discovered, and the heir was brought back again; for Quin hadn't even gone away from Trebartha with him; but though he was brought back, the shock killed his mother, and from that day Sir Richard was a changed man."

"They didn't do anything to poor Quin because she was daff, you know, and the folks about here thought it was no crime to lay the dead child in his father's house. But after the boy she had stolen was taken from her, Quin grew more quiet, though she took to drink when she could get it, which, luckily, wasn't often. And in the course of time Sir Richard died, and his son, who was grown up by that time, succeeded him. Mrs. Penfold, my mistress, was Sir Richard's sister, and the aunt of Sir Walter, your father, and she had been kind to Quin. Mind, I don't say she set Quin to take Sir Walter's child away; as she had once taken him, but Mrs. Penfold wasn't surprised at it, and 'twas she who reaped the benefit."

"Your father!"

The words seemed two-edged, and their effect upon Elsie was such as to make her heart leap with emotion.

"Thon Sir Walter's child was stolen?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes, of course she was," replied Perran. "Sir Walter had married Miss Elfreda Tre-

lawny, and they had but one child, a little girl, who was named after her mother."

"Yes," said the listener, breathlessly, for again the woman had paused.

"When the child was a little more than two years old, Mrs. Penfold came on a visit to her nephew and his wife, and she met Quin and gave her money, and what she said to the poor daff creature Heaven only knows—but she upset her—made her restless as the waves that roll into the Cove, and opened old sores that were well-nigh forgotten. I must tell you that Quin had cursed Trebartha when she heard that Sir Richard was bringing home a bride to the castle, and a blight did fall on the place. The cliffs fell into the sea, and never a pilchard has been caught near Trebartha from that day to this, and the curse on Trebartha has become a saying in the country-side."

Elsie showed no sign of incredulity, for she thought that heartless cruelty and wanton wrong were sufficient to bring a blight upon any place.

"And so it happened," continued Nan Perran, in a slow, monotonous tone, as though she were telling a fairy tale, or an old legend, "so it happened, that one morning when Lady Trebartha went into the nursery to kiss her little daughter—as she always did—she found that her cot was empty, and on the pillow was pinned a paper, badly written, for Quin wasn't much of a scholar, but the words were clear enough:—

'The cures on Trebartha shall always remain;

'Till the child of the true heir be brought back again.'

Quin always used to call Sir Walter the true heir, and this would have proved who wrote it if nothing else did. It was very hard for me at the time, for I was Lady Trebartha's maid, and a sweet, gentle lady she was, and it grieved my heart to see how she drooped like a flower when her child was gone, and never lifted her head again."

"But didn't they seek for the child?" asked Elsie, with repressed excitement.

"Aye, they sought for her far and wide, but all that was ever known of them was that Quin was seen with a little girl, shabbily dressed, that was crying, and could only just walk, on Carnruthan, a headland over yonder, and 'twas supposed she'd fallen or jumped into the sea with the child in her arms."

"But what makes you believe that I am that child?" asked Elsie, eagerly.

"You've got her name; you grow more like my lady every day, and you've got a white mark on your neck, which Mrs. Penfold recognised as well as myself; 'twas done with a knife by her, 'twas an accident, but it might have killed you; 'twould have done so if it had been a hair's breadth nearer the ear."

"But is that all?" asked Elsie, and there was the sound of disappointment in her voice.

"No, it is not quite all," was the answer. "The child when she was taken away had on her own clothes except her frock and out-of-door things, and she had on a flannel petticoat embroidered in white silk, with sprays of heather all about the bottom of it. The heather is the flower of the Trebarthas, and my lady worked with her own hands two petticoats for her little girl. One the child had on when she was taken away, the other I have by me now. Do you know what clothes you wore when you were found?"

"No, but Mrs. Curtis, Mr. Denison's housekeeper, has them still; she told me so," exclaimed Elsie, in an agitated voice.

"It is well; it will all be made plain. I see the finger of Providence in it all," said the woman, slowly and reverently. "And now, there is one thing more," she added, gravely, "are you going to marry Mr. Maltby?"

"No, I am not," was the ready and emphatic answer.

"You have quite made up your mind to that?" questioned the woman, and she fixed her piercing eyes upon her.

"Quite," said Elsie, resolutely. "I would not marry him if the discovery of the proof of what you have just told me depended upon my doing so."

"That is well, but we must get away from here; we must escape to your old home, you are not safe here. Every hour increases your danger. Ah! the clock strikes! The new year has begun. I have eased my mind, and done my duty to the dead. A happy new year to you, Miss Elsie."

She took Elsie's hand and kissed it as she spoke, then glided quietly from the room, leaving in the heart of the girl a mingled feeling of intense sadness, and of unbounded pity for the parents who had mourned her, but likewise of great happiness at the prospect of the bright future which seemed so near to her now.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"COME TO ME!" HE CRIED.

The snow and frost that accompanied Elsie to Cornwall did not last long, neither did the extreme cold weather again show itself at Trebartha that winter.

Indeed, New Year's Day was as warm and genial as though it had been early summer, and Clarence Maltby had suggested to Elsie that they should go out for a sail in a small yacht which Mrs. Penfold had given him as a new year's gift.

But Elsie declined; she said she was afraid of the sea, as she probably was, and she certainly had no desire to take a pleasure-trip with such a companion.

"Well, come and see me off if you won't come with me," said Clarence, in an aggrieved tone, "and don't bring that horrid maid of yours. I can't speak a word to you while she is by."

"I don't care to go out alone, and I like Tamzen," replied Elsie, carelessly.

But she was scarcely paying the attention to the matter which Mr. Maltby seemed to think it merited, for her mind was full of what Perran had told her the previous night, and she was beginning to think that what the woman hinted at was more than probable, and that it would be well for them both to go to the Hermitage, and see Mrs. Curtis with as little delay as possible.

With her mind thus occupied, Elsie paid very little heed to the preparations for a sail that were being made. She saw neither harm nor danger in going down half-way to the cove to watch the yacht start from the foot of Trebartha steps, and she promised to do so.

It was Tamzen's agitated manner that at first attracted Elsie's attention.

The maid was pale and nervous, and she made several attempts to speak before she succeeded in asking—

"Do you mean to go with him, miss?"

"Go with whom?" asked Elsie, quickly.

"With Mr. Maltby," was the answer.

"No," was the cold and somewhat curt reply, for Elsie had previously observed that Tamzen took more interest in the young man than was desirable for her own peace of mind.

"He means to take you with him," said the servant, slowly, and not without difficulty.

"He's planned it all with Mrs. Penfold. He's got a licence in his pocket to marry you. He's going up to Padstow; he'll anchor in the river for the night, and take you to church the next morning."

"But I won't marry him!" asserted Elsie, angrily.

"They say you'll be bound to marry him if you stay on board the yacht all night, and he will take good care you don't get ashore before the morning," replied Tamzen.

Elsie's face became very pale. Several little things she had observed helped to confirm the girl's story, and she was now thoroughly alarmed.

"What am I to do?" she asked, helplessly.

Then she demanded, with sudden incredulity,—

"Are you quite sure that Mrs. Penfold knows of this infamous plot?"

"Tis her plot, not his," returned Tamzen, scornfully. "I overheard her tell him all about it. He isn't so sweet on the matter himself, for he always thought he would be master of Trebartha without your help, but the mistress insisted, and she always will have her own way."

Elsie, by this time, had turned to retrace her steps to the castle, and she said, angrily,—

"I won't leave the house again to-day, and they can't drag me down to the boat."

"No, miss, but they'll get you there another time if they don't to-day," said Tamzen, nervously, "and I've got a message for you from Perran. She bade me tell you 'the time has come.'"

"What did she mean?"

"I don't know, miss, but she said she'd meet you at the stone cross at the foot of the hill, as soon as the yacht had sailed from the cove."

"But why not before?" demanded Elsie.

"I suppose she can't get away, miss; besides, you'll want a little time before you; and she said something about Mrs. Penfold and the Court of Chancery, but I don't know what she meant."

Elsie knew, however.

She was so far alive to the situation that she knew it was more than probable, that if she did not marry Clarence Mrs. Penfold would claim the guardianship of her, and, if her authority were disputed, would at once make her a ward in Chancery.

Still she did not understand all that Tamzen wanted to suggest, and it was with no slight amazement that she listened, while her maid proposed that they should, at the time appointed, go half-way down to the cove as previously arranged, and should stay at the entrance of the smuggler's cave, having first made a sufficient change in their attire for Tamzen to be mistaken for the lady, and Elsie for the maid. Then Tamzen was to allow herself to be carried off, and Elsie was to hide in the cave till the yacht sailed away.

Naturally enough Tamzen did not rise in the esteem of her mistress, as she thus unfolded her plan, but she cared little for this, if she could get her to consent to the stratagem.

Elsie, who scarcely believed that anything of the kind would be attempted, and who did not know how otherwise to help herself if it were, at length reluctantly promised to go, the cave, and for a few minutes to allow Tamzen to put on her sealskin palmeto and a small brown velvet bonnet with a Maltese lace veil, in which she would take care to let Mrs. Penfold and Clarence see her before she started.

She also consented to put her sealskin cap in her pocket, and to allow Tamzen to carry a brown ulster for her to wear when the change was made. It all seemed simple enough, and as the sailors belonging to the yacht were not men from the neighbourhood, but strangers to the place, the probability was that Tamzen's plot would succeed; if Clarence were not waiting to receive her when she was brought on deck.

But this, she believed, he would not be doing, she having heard it arranged that he should keep out of sight of his captive until they had left the cove.

Of one thing Elsie was quite determined. If such an attempt upon her freedom were made, she would no longer consider herself bound to Mrs. Penfold by given promise or interested kindness, but would hasten to the Hermitage with all possible speed, taking Nan Perran with her.

Now that the mystery which surrounded her early life was cleared up, or was likely to be so, she no longer desired to shun Lionel Denison.

She had, if the truth be told, been a little disappointed at his not having sought and found her here; but as her boxes had not

arrived, and as none of the letters which she had written to Charlie Birch or to Isolt Greatrex had been answered, she began to think that something more than indifference on the part of her friends was the cause of their unaccountable silence.

But a critical hour is at hand.

It had first of all been proposed that the trip should take place in the morning; then, as Elsie resolutely refused to go on board the yacht, it was postponed till after luncheon, on the presumption that Mrs. Penfold would go with the girls.

At the last moment, however, the old lady changed her mind; and they went off without her.

Clarence had already left the castle, and had gone on board.

The two girls saw the boat in which he had left the strand, reach the side of the pretty craft.

But there was no sign of interest from any one else on the shore.

The few men who lived in the village of Trebartha were either out at sea, or working in the slate quarries, and the women and children rarely went down on the narrow slip of sand, unless they had some reason for so doing.

"Quick," said Tamzen, as Elsie stood at the mouth of the cave, looking at the graceful yacht.

Rather reluctantly our heroine disappeared with the girl into the cave, and in a few seconds the change of dress was made.

Elsie had put on her fur cap and a short gauze veil, hiding her hair as much as possible, and had exchanged her sealskin for the ulster in which she had left Tiverton.

The change, indeed, was in Tamzen. She seemed all at once to be a person of some importance, as she came out into the light and waved her handkerchief to Maltby, who was on board the yacht.

At that moment footsteps were heard ascending the steps, and a few seconds afterwards three men appeared, one after the other, and Elsie then knew that Tamzen had told her the truth.

Neither of the girls were known to these men personally, but they were told that the lady wore a handsome sealskin, and they now addressed themselves to Tamzen.

"We've come to take you on board, miss," said the foremost. "We won't do you no harm, you'll be well taken care of, but it's no use making a fuss, for there's nobody to help you."

Tamzen dared not trust herself to speak, but she turned to Elsie, who had shrunk back into the shadow of the cave.

"No, we don't want that young woman," said the man quickly; "our orders are, she is to stay behind, and now I must gag you, miss, unless you promise to hold your tongue."

"I—I won't speak!" gasped the girl in real terror.

"And you won't struggle or make any sign for help?" demanded the ruffian sternly.

"No," was the trembling reply.

Then she was marched down the winding steps, one of the men leading the way, and two of them following her.

In that manner they entered the boat, and went on board the yacht, and Elsie stood where they had left her, and watched the graceful craft, with her wing-like sails unfurled, glide bravely out to sea.

That was the last that was seen at Trebartha of the "Elfrieda" and her ill-fated crew.

They started late in the afternoon, and night soon overtook them.

What happened on board when it was discovered that the servant and not the mistress had been captured, none have survived to tell. The yacht never made Padstow nor any other harbour that night, and many days afterwards portions of her wreck were found, conclusive evidence as to what had been her fate.

Knowing nothing of what was going to be,

and conscious only that she had escaped a great danger, Elsie sought the secret steps in the cave, which Tamzen had previously shown her, and climbing up these with no slight difficulty, she at length found herself not only in the open air, but in a path by the side of a higher road, which shielded her from the sight of anyone in the castle.

Her great desire now was to get away from Trebartha, from the home of her ancestors, and the place of her birth.

If all went well with her, and if her hopes were realised, she would come back again and make this place her home likewise.

But now there was danger in the very air she breathed—safety only was to be found in flight; and if Perran were at the stone cross or not, she felt that she must hasten to London, however difficult it might be to get there.

Coming by this hidden path, she did not see the stone cross at the foot of the hill upon which the castle stood, until, on turning an angle, she came close upon it, and then she became conscious that a man was there as well as a woman, and with a strange combination of hope and fear, her eyes sought his face.

"Elsie, my darling, come to me!" he cried, extending his arms, while his face was eloquent with the love that filled his soul.

Never was such an entreaty responded to more quickly, or with less reserve, for without a moment's hesitation the girl sprang forward, was clasped to Lionel Denison's heart, and in that rapturous embrace they knew, without words being spoken, that from henceforth there would be no parting—no misunderstanding—between them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

PERRAN accompanied Elsie and Mr. Denison to London, where they did not arrive until the evening of the following day.

The old woman was by no means pleased with the presence of the gentleman, and Elsie's explanation that he was her guardian—the man who had found and cared for her when she was a child—did not reconcile her to the fact that, guardian or not, he was undoubtedly a lover.

Convinced as she was that Elsie was the daughter of her late master and mistress, and her mind being incapable of realising the idea that any save the reigning family in England could be socially above the Trebarthas, Perran felt bitterly convinced that the match for Elsie was far from being a good one.

She ventured, indeed, to hint as much when she was alone with the young lady that night.

But Elsie silenced the suggestion at once by saying proudly,—

"Mr. Denison is a gentleman, one of the most noble and tender-hearted of men; and if I were a queen I should feel proud and honoured to become his wife."

After this Perran said no more.

She had a duty to perform—a duty to the dead as well as to the living; and when this was accomplished she felt that she should drift back to Trebartha to end her days in the place where she was born.

One of Elsie's first questions when she and Lionel could talk quietly together was about Edith Grey. The woman's cruel words still ranked in the girl's heart, and she wished to know how much truth there was in them.

And Lionel told her all, truthfully and without reserve.

He did not pretend that he had not loved Edith, nor that her conduct had not pained him deeply at the time, but he told Elsie also what was equally true, that Edith had really jilted him to be free to accept a more wealthy suitor, and that he did not know until his return from China, fifteen years afterwards, that she had not actually married Mr. Hazlewood, of Starcroft.

"But I never loved her, my darling, as I love you!" he concluded, clasping the fair girl in his arms.

"I have heard that there is no love like the first love," sighed Elsie sadly.

"And I have heard that there is no love like the last love," he retorted, with a laugh; "but you need never be jealous of Miss Grey, my dear; there is no woman under the sun for whom I have such a sincere contempt."

No doubt Elsie was quite satisfied that his heart was all her own, for she began to tell him about Mrs. Penfold and the Trebarthas, and she astonished him not a little by asserting that Perran believed, and she herself did not doubt, that she was the last of the Trebarthas.

"So instead of marrying a penniless little outcast you will get an heiress for a wife," she said, looking at him proudly and tenderly.

But his face became grave. The news was scarcely welcome; and Elsie, who noticed the change and insisted upon knowing the cause, soon learnt that he feared she would be taken away from him.

"Yes, that is what I feared," she replied; "for I heard that Mrs. Penfold said something about the Court of Chancery, and that is why I was so anxious to meet you, dear. I am not going to be sent away now, you may be quite sure."

"Then we had better get married as soon as possible," he said, promptly. "We won't have anything investigated with regard to your birth until you are my wife. I have always had a great objection to marry an heiress."

"But I must sign my name as Elfreda Trebartha for once in my life," protested Elsie. "I couldn't marry you under any other name."

He objected, but of course he had to yield; and if he supposed that he was going to control Perran and Mrs. Curtis, he gave himself credit for having much more authority than he was ever likely to possess.

For the old Cornishwoman had not been in the Hermitage more than an hour before she and Mrs. Curtis had talked over the whole affair, and Perran had produced her little petticoat worked by the hands of the late Lady Trebartha, and Mrs. Curtis had brought out the clothes in which Elsie had first come to her.

They had been washed and kept in lavender ever since, but Perran recognised them all, even to the common little frock and cape that had been taken from her nephew's wife at the time that Sir Walter Trebartha's child was stolen.

In confirmation of her story, Perran unripped the band of the embroidered petticoat the child had worn when she was found, and inside it, back-stitched in long hair, were the two names, "Elfreda Trebartha." It was a piece of another garment that had been used for a band, and the woman remembered the circumstance of the petticoat being made, and knew where to seek for the proof, which was to her mind conclusive.

She was persuaded, though not without difficulty, to tell her story to a lawyer, to sign her name to sundry papers, and to stay at the Hermitage until after Elsie was married.

She was, indeed, one of the witnesses at this quiet, but all-important ceremony.

Lionel had gone to stay with a clerical friend in the neighbourhood, while the slow days went by that the law required to elapse before the wedding could take place.

But the happy morning at last arrived. The wedding took place without fuss or secrecy, and when the happy pair went off for their honeymoon Perran set out on her solitary journey to Cornwall.

She doubted much the kind of reception she would meet with at Trebartha, but she was not prepared for the startling change that had come over her old mistress in the short time that she had been away.

Mrs. Penfold rallied, and once more sat upright when she learnt that Elsie was still alive. Up to this time she had feared that she, as well as Clarence Maltby, had found a watery grave.

After this very little seemed to surprise her.

She was quite ready to admit that Elsie was the child stolen from Sir Walter Trebartha and his wife Elfreda. She had felt but little doubt on the matter from the first hour they had met, and she was now so thankful to know that Elsie was still alive that she at once sent for her lawyer, expressed her willingness to give up the castle to the rightful heiress; and at the same time she gave instructions for a will, in which the whole of her own fortune, with the exception of a few legacies, was bequeathed to our heroine.

Even Elsie's marriage did not displease her, and she expressed a wish to see the bride and bridegroom before she herself went away from the castle.

But she never did go away alive.

One day they found her seated as usual at her bedroom window, whence she could command an extensive view of the sea-beaten coast.

She had fallen asleep here, and that sleep had deepened to one from which there is no waking.

Edith Grey heard of Lionel Denison's marriage, as did most of the world, by means of the newspapers, before many days had passed by, and she could not imagine who Elfreda Trebartha could be.

Her curiosity was so great that at length she induced her mother to call at the Hermitage, see the housekeeper, and obtain all particulars about the bride of the man whom she had herself jilted.

Knowing to whom the story would be repeated Mrs. Curtis was very communicative, and she particularly impressed upon her listener that it had all come about through Miss Grey driving poor little Elsie from the Hermitage.

"If she hadn't been drove away and obliged to earn a living, she'd never have met the grand folks she was stolen from," continued Mrs. Curtis, emphatically. "So all the good fortune has come to Mrs. Denison through your daughter, ma'am, though, as I say—small thanks to her for it."

When all this was repeated to Edith she uttered a sharp cry, and seemed to be seized with agonizing pain.

Some people said it was tight-lacing, others said it was the poison she had taken for many years in small doses to improve her complexion. Whatever the cause the result was the same.

A few minutes ensued, in which the physical agony of a lifetime seemed to be concentrated, and then the struggle ceased; the pain died out, and the life of the miserable woman died out with it.

Arthur Carew, after listening to the conversation between Elsie and Mr. Kingswood at the ball at Trevelyan Court, made up his mind to call upon the young lady and propose to her as soon as possible.

But when he did call at Monkshill, he heard that she had gone away, though a servant whom he liberally bribed gave him the address to which her luggage was directed.

Thither he went, and saw Isolt Groatrex, who told him truly enough that she knew nothing of the whereabouts of her friend.

She invited him to stay to luncheon, however, and he did so, making the acquaintance of Mr. Groatrex, who seemed to take rather a fancy to him.

He called again to learn if Isolt had heard from Elsie. Indeed, this was an excuse for a great many visits, until excuse was no longer needed, and he came at length in the character of an accepted suitor.

Before he and Isolt were married, however, Harry Kingswood led to the altar the mistress of Monkshill.

There were people malicious enough, to broadly hint that Charlie proposed, and that she likewise did most of the wooing; but the young lady herself cares nothing for these

ramours, and laughs merrily when she hears them.

He laughs who wins, and some people are not too scrupulous as to the manner in which they gain their ends, provided only that success crowns their efforts.

As for Lionel Denison, he has suffered much, and has waited long for his happiness, but it has come to him at last—a rich, ripe, golden harvest.

Elfie and he spend the greater portion of their time at Trebartha Castle, but they will not sell the Hermitage, though they have been often asked to do so.

Some few weeks in each year they always live here, to the great delight of Mrs. Curtis, who is getting old now, but who is never tired of talking of the day when her master brought her a sleeping child, who is now his wife, and whom he had found "ALL AMONG THE HEATHER!"

[THE END.]

OUR LITTLE CHARLIE.

—O—

It was a gloomy, half-lighted attic-room in a lodging-house—a room where the smoke from the smouldering fire curled in odd, fantastic wreaths in the angles of the sloping ceiling, and mice gnawed stealthily at the base-boards. Not a pleasant place to die in, and perhaps it was just as well that poor Phoebe Wells, in her restless delirium, fancied herself back once more among the velvet grass and apple-blossoms of the sweet-scented orchard at home.

Meanwhile a child of four years old, with his round face besmeared with dirt and his flaxen curls tightly matted together with neglect, sat coiled up in the window-seat, playing with a headless wooden horse and singing softly to himself. For the afternoon sunshine was warm on his face, and what did little Charlie know of death?

"Sure, it's wanderin' she is," said one of the women who were sitting in the room, "and enough to tire the patience of the blindest saints themselves, sittin' here. There's the bit of a letter she began to write and hadn't strength to finish, and the sixpenny bottle of ink out of me own pocket—what shall we do with it?"

"Burn it," shortly returns a wrinkled old hag, who was already busy in turning over the slender store of linen in the worn hair trunk to find something fitting for a shroud. "It's no use to anybody now, an' she can't spake reasonable to tell us where it's to go. Yes, yes, honey, I know," as Phoebe piteously stretched out her attenuated hands with a wistful cry of, "Charlie—my boy—you'll take Charlie home!"

"Sure, an' it's that we will," said the old woman, chuckling. "We've got nothin' else to do, me fine lady, an' lots o' money to spare, excursionin round the country! Lie still—that's a dear!"

But still she cried, "Charlie! Charlie!" and the younger woman lifted the little creature, still clinging to his wooden horse, on to the bed. Charlie opened his blue eyes wonderingly and began to cry,—

"Mamma, what makes you look so strange?"

She drew him close down to her with a shuddering sigh, his cheek against hers, his tangled curls mingling with her dishevelled black tresses.

"Oh, my baby, I cannot go and leave you—I cannot! I—"

The death-rattle in her throat interrupted all further attempts at speech. There were one or two incoherent murmuring sounds—that was all—and so poor Phoebe Wells died.

They took little Charlie away bewildered and terrified, and despatched some one for the "charity coffin" which was to enfold the poor creature's last remains.

"She's got no friends," said Mrs. Dennis, "an' it's but fair, after all the trouble we've had, Nora Macarty, we should divide the little she's left."

"It's me ought to have the bits o' clothes an' things," said Nora jealously. "You never came a-nigh her till the last two days."

"Well, an' it's no more than fair, Nora, dear," said the Irishwoman, smoothly; "an' you goin' to be married in a month. You kape the clothes, an' welcome; an' I'll have the bit of a boy; he's just the child I want for beggin'. Come along, child, an' stop that cryin', or it'll be the worse for yez. Did ye want a taste o' Mother Dennis' strap? Then should yer noise!"

Charlie followed his rough guide, frightened into a trembling silence. Poor little creature, it was well that he was not old enough to realise the terrible fate now opening before him.

"Yez wouldn't belav it, an' him so young," said Mrs. Dennis, triumphantly; "but he's the best lifter in all the children! See there, Mike Dooley, two hankers an' a snuff box, let alone the two apples from the peddler's stand, an' an ash-box half full of illigant paper-rags. Give him a drop o' yer beer, Mike, an' ye shall have baked potatoes an' pigs' trotters for your supper, darlint!"

Such was the state of affairs, one December night, when our little hero came wailing home, with purple cheeks and chilled fingers and toes, conscious that he had nothing to plead why he should not be sent supperless to bed.

But, to his astonishment, Mrs. Dennis was all motherly affability, and Mike Dooley himself took him between his knees in front of the blazing fire, and helped to chafe his hands. Mike, in general, being as brutal a ruffian as ever came in contact with the law, Charlie could not imagine what it all meant.

"It's two old maids o' 'em livin' all alone," said Mrs. Dennis, resuming the conversation where it had been broken off at Charlie's entrance; "and there's a closet full of old plate, an' Norah says—Norah cleaned them, yez knows—the staircase windy, openin' on the back street, would let a good-sized cat in between the bars, and where a cat can go our Charlie can. Wouldn't yez like that, Charlie, dear, to help crack a crib?"

Charlie stared vacantly into the fire, and munched his crust of stale bread, and "didn't care."

"All ye'll have to do will be to creep in, atween daylight an' dusk, honey, and hide away like a mouse."

Charlie had nothing to do but agree.

"To-morrow night at eleven I'll be waiting at the corner of the street wid a cloak an' a big market-basket, an' I'll see that Charlie's there afore us."

The next afternoon, just as the wintry twilight was fading into black indistinguishable dusk, Mrs. Dennis skillfully propelled the slender, cat-like figure of little Charlie through the narrow iron bars of the staircase window. She was just in time, for as she stooped again to poke in the depths of an ash-barrel with her well-worn iron hook, a policeman lounged round the corner of the house.

"Hullo! old woman, what are you doing here?"

"An' is it the cinders ye'd grudge me?" whined Mrs. Dennis, "an' the fire goin' out on the hearth-stone, wid the six little ones blue wid the cold. Arrah, an' it's hard lines for poor folks, so it is, and Mickey McGargan, me husband, that is—"

"Well, well, you needn't make such a noise about it," deprecated the policeman, striding on.

And Mrs. Dennis smiled stealthily under her ragged, red hood.

Meanwhile Charlie, obedient to orders, curled himself up under the stairway, amid a lot of tin bath-tubs, disused furniture, and invalidated saucepans and went composedly to sleep.

How long he had slept he did not know, but the narrow stairway was lighted up by

the glare of a candle when he woke, and a hand was on the ragged lapels of his coat.

"Why, bless me, it's a child!" shrieked a female voice.

"Nonsense, Nancy, it's only the cat."

"I tell you it's a child, and he's fast asleep under the tin tub."

Another figure advanced into the yellow circle of flickering light thrown by the candle—that of a tall, pleasant-looking woman, with a something in her face that made Charlie's heart stand still, and brought the long disused word "Mamma" involuntary to his lips.

"How on earth came you here, little boy?" she asked, little less astonished than her companion had been.

Charlie glanced furtively about the room, in vain search for a loophole of escape; but there was none, and Charlie had no idea of sacrificing himself for the sakes of Mother Dennis and Mike Dooley.

"Mrs. Dennis put me through the window," he whispered, "and she and Mike are coming at eleven o'clock to steal the spoons and things, and I'm to unbolt the front door for 'em; and please, ma'am, I never did such a thing before, and I'm so cold, and—and—"

Charlie wound up his explanatory speech with a burst of very genuine tears, and screwed his little knuckles tightly into his round blue eyes.

"My goodness gracious!" ejaculated the elder lady.

"Bless us and save us!" shrieked the younger.

"It's a planned burglary," said Miss Nancy. "Send some one for the police!" screamed Miss Betsy, hysterically.

"Yes," sobbed little Charlie, entering heart and soul into the new cause, "get a policeman to stand back o' the front door and I'll open it just as if nothin' had happened. And, oh! don't you give me up to 'em please, please, lady, or they'll beat me to death an' sell me to the doctors afterward!"

"Don't be afraid, my little fellow," said Miss Nancy, who had been giving some orders in a hurried whisper to a grizzled old servant-maid who had stood staring in the background. "Come with me. Why, how cold your hands are! No one shall harm you."

She led the sobbing, shrinking little urchin into a cozy parlour, where the crimson carpet and curtains seemed to reflect ruddy lights from the glowing sea-coal fire, and the chandelier diffused a shaded lustre through the room.

The walls were hung with soberly-tinted old family portraits, which seemed to stare down upon the bewildered child with human eyes of reproach and curiosity.

"See, Nancy! he is really pretty," said Miss Betsy, smoothing down the tangled curly hair, as she led him up to the fire. "And only see what blue eyes he has! Poor little soul! and so young, too—a mere baby! What is your name, child?"

"Charlie!"

"Charlie what?"

But the child shook his head vaguely.

"Only Charlie—and mamma's name was Phoebe."

At that instant, in his restless motions around, the little fellow caught sight of a portrait hanging in a recess, hitherto obscured from his gaze. He uttered a cry.

"Mamma! that is Charlie's own mamma!"

"Gracious goodness!" exclaimed Miss Nancy, trembling in every joint, "what does the child mean? That is our Phoebe!"

"It is mamma! Mamma's name was Phoebe, and she had black hair just like that, and big black eyes."

And the child, who had treasured up that one flower of memory in his mind for two long years, began to sob and cry pitifully.

"I want my mamma! they have taken her away from me! Where is my mamma?"

Miss Betsy rose up, pale and solemn.

"Nancy, it's a voice from the grave! It's Phoebe come back to us, to put her little

child's hand in ours! We have searched for her in vain these five years—now her orphan child has come straight to us! Don't you see Heaven's hand in it, Nancy? We disowned her, and sent her away, because she would marry the man she loved—we never relented when we heard she was left a widow—but we mourned and sought her long when it was too late!"

Her voice was stifled by tears, but little Charlie was held close, close to her heart! The outcast babe—the little neglected pariah—had been led by the guiding hand of Providence straight to the home and the hearts that were waiting for him. If poor Phoebe Wells could but have seen that day, amid the mists that surrounded her dying sight!

The policemen, summoned duly by old Margery, arrived, and were put on the watch. And when the front door was stealthily unbolted, Mr. Dooley and Mrs. Dennis walked straight into the arms of two burly detectives, who were in no haste to unloose their affectionate embrace!

"It's that little chate o' the world has betrayed us—but I'll tear his heart out!" shrieked Mrs. Dennis, vainly struggling with her captors. But Charlie, holding tightly on to Miss Nancy's protecting hand, boldly defied her threats and Miss Dooley's deeper and more silent rage.

Charlie was too young to know it, but he had escaped a fate worse than death. The two old-maid aunts took him into the vacant spot in their hearts, and Charlie learned for the first time in his little hunted life what it was to have a home!

"Some people talk of fate," Miss Betsy would say, reflectively, "but I call it Providence; if you don't believe what I say, just let me tell you the story of our little Charlie!" H. F. G.

FAÇETIE.

A GRAY RESPONSIBILITY.—The sexton's.

ETTY MOZLEY is the girl who doesn't waste words.

ONLY a question of time—"What o'clock is it?"

WHEN creek meets creek, then comes the annual spring freshet.

WHICH two of the letters of the alphabet tell the downfall of many a young man? X S.

"We propose," says a paper, "that the phrase, 'Money no object' be amended to read 'Money no objection.'"

IT is scientifically estimated that if all the "champion" roller-skaters in the world should stand up in a row there wouldn't be people enough left to count them.

OF WIFE-TAKING.—"He that takes a wife takes care," says Franklin; but Brown says that this is wrong—that he who takes care doesn't take a wife.

"Yes," remarked Fogg, "Miss Singleton is a nice girl, but somehow she reminds me of that field over there where those cows are, slowly but surely starving to death—little past her age, you know."

"HERE, Jenks! that watch you sold me two weeks ago, and warranted to be a good timekeeper, won't keep any time at all. It won't go more'n half the time." "Well I told you it was a first-class stop-watch."

MATILDA'S lover to her little sister: "Come, Myrtle, give me a kiss, only one." L. S.: "No, I won't; you asked Tildy for just one, in the parlour, before dinner, and you took two."

"I don't believe in church seats free," said Deacon Ames. "And why not?" inquired the parson. "Because they make people good, for nothing."

"Mr dear," asked Mrs. Wiggs of Mrs. Diggs, "can you tell me why they call them tour-nures?" "Yes," was the reply: "it is because you have to tour-nure head round to see how it hangs." "Oh!"

THE oldest combination lock: Wedlock.

A SOLDIER will not read *Robinson Crusoe* because it is the work of De Foo.

A COAL dealer of the bon ton: He who gives 2,240 pounds to the ton.

DIFFICULT punctuation: Putting a stop to a gossip's tongue.

CULINARILY considered, delinquent debtors are very rare, because they are so often under dam.

THE row between England and Russia is a financial one. Both are striving for the capital of the Afghans.

HOW to keep your own counsel: Get into a chancery suit, and you will never get rid of him.

AN axe was sent, by order, to an Englishman in Paris, but he didn't get it. Really, the English in Paris seldom get the axe sent (accent).

APPROPRIATE GAMES.—For entomologists, cricket; for chiropodists, foot-ball; for bishops, lawn-tennis; for punsters, skit-ties; for indolent people, nap; for toddy-drinkers, bowls; for roughs, racket.

AT an inn in Sweden there is the following inscription on the wall, in English: "You will find at Trollhätte excellent bread, meat, and wine, provided you bring them with you."

BITING SARCASTIC.—An editor, in boasting of his triumph over a rival, says: "We think we have punctured the old wind-bag of the *Courier*, as we haven't heard anything from him for more than a week. Feel like you had been kicked by a donkey, don't you, old man?" To which the rival responds: "Yes, that's just exactly the way we feel!"

VIZIER: "Well, Mrs. Flanagan, what did the doctor say about your poor husband's deafness?" Mrs. Flanagan: "Bedad, miss, the doctor says Tim'll never hear agin; but—she whispers—"please don't spake loud—it might make him depressed loike."

A LADY presented the collection box to a wealthy man noted for his stinginess, and as usual he pleaded poverty. She quickly responded: "Then take something out; this collection is for the poor, you know."

"You're good for nothing at all," said a farmer's wife, petulantly, to her husband, as she sat sewing. "Why, Maria, why do you talk so? There is mighty little difference between us. Things are only reversed in our cases. I gather what I sow, and you sow what you gather."

AN OPENING FOR HIM.

"I came here," he explained to the police judge, the other morning, "to hang out a sign that 'I'm blind,' but I had scarcely got off the train when I found two chaps working the racket. Too much blindness arouses public suspicion."

"Was that the only opening?"

"No, sir. I started out to tie my head and arm up and work the 'Help this poor man who was hurt in a railway accident,' but the two best corners in town were occupied. One fellow had been crushed by a saw log, and the other had been terribly burned while rescuing a baby."

"Pity the poor fire sufferers!" sighed his Honour.

"About the only thing left," continued the man, "was to be 'born deaf and dumb,' but while I was getting a placard printed by a grocer's clerk the owner of the shop came in and said he had just seen two such chaps walked to the station. Then it was either go to work or come here and be sent up."

"And you couldn't work?"

"Well, I was wearing a placard reading: 'This man would work for a shilling per day but for his poor health,' when the officer collared me. You'll have to make an opening for me somewhere."

His worship gave him a placard reading: "This unfortunate person has been imprisoned for two months."

CARVING TO ACCOMMODATE.—"Will you carve the roast beef, Mr. Jorlap?" asked the landlady, slinging a sweet smile at the head boarder. "Certainly, with pleasure, madam," responded Jorlap. "Where's the saw?"

DUMLEY complained at the supper-table of not feeling just right. "Perhaps," ventured the landlady, "your dinner didn't set well." Dumley shook his head. "No," he said, "it can't be that. That chicken we had was a fowl of too much experience not to set well."

"What a stupid play this is, Henry! I have half a mind to go home." "Why, Clara, this is the fourth time you have seen it, and you liked it so well before that you insisted on coming again." "Yes, I know! but I've got my new summer bonnet on, and they are too stingy to turn on their old gas between the acts."

THIS is the time of year when the city man with country cousins commences to write to the latter, and tell them how sorry he is they did not come up to see him and spend two or three months during the winter, and how he hopes that his wife and the children may find time to run up for a brief visit during the summer, just to show the country cousins he don't forget them.

AN ACCOMPLISHED WIFE.—"Ah, old fellow," said a city man recently, on meeting a friend, "so you are married at last! Allow me to congratulate you, for I hear you have an excellent and accomplished wife." "I have, indeed," was the reply; "she is so accomplished! Why, sir, she is perfectly at home in literature, at home in music, at home in art, at home in science—in short, at home everywhere, except—" "Except what?" asked the city man. "Except at home!" replied his friend.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.—"Too bad I had to go out to see that ticked-seller about seats for next week," he remarked to his new bride, as he settled himself down after a trip downstairs between acts. "The affair quite slipped my mind as we came in. Were you annoyed, my dear?" "O, no! I was quite busy working out a mental problem." "And what was that, love?" "Why, they call the front curtain the drop." "I see. Did you succeed?" "Yes, I think I got the correct answer." "And that was—" "Because so many men go out for a drop when it is down."

A SOLEMN QUESTION.—A distinguished divine of unusually solemn and impressive appearance went out to a country town not long ago to lecture. He arrived early in the afternoon, and all the town, of course, spotted him within five minutes as a very great and very saintly man. He went into a chemist's, and, in tones that froze the blood of the young man behind the counter, said, "Young-man—do-you—smoke?" "Y—yes, sir," said the trembling youth; "I'm sorry, but I learned the habit young, and haven't been able to quit it yet." "Then," said the great divine, without the movement of a muscle or the abatement of a shade of the awful solemnity of his voice, "can you tell me where I can get a good cigar?"

PREPARING FOR A FLOGGING.—A youngster who had been detected by his father in the act of stealing some fruit stored for winter consumption, was angrily bidden to "go into the next room, and prepare himself for a severe flogging." Having finished the work he had in hand, the inexorable parent armed himself with a stout horse-whip, and went in quest of the culprit, whom he found ornamented with a hump on his back. "What on earth have you got on your back?" asked the wondering sire. "A leather apron," replied John, "three double. You told me to prepare myself for a severe flogging, and I've done the best I could." The father's gravity was not proof against this unexpected translation of his words; the muscles of his face and hands relaxed simultaneously, the whip was let fall, and John escaped for that time with an "admonition."

SOCIETY.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES has joined, it is said, the enthusiastic army of amateur photographers, and has been busying herself in becoming acquainted with the mysteries of "focussing," "exposing," &c. Photography is now one of the most fashionable amusements, and those in the trade (we are not sure that they do not call it a profession) are kept very busy printing from the negatives of amateurs, many of whom succeed in obtaining the most artistic results.

FRENCH ALFRED of Edinburgh met with an awkward mishap recently. Whilst the Duke and Duchess, with the young prince and party, were dragging the Stour for fish, Prince Alfred, being a little too venturesome, fell into the river. He was fortunately rescued with no more serious results than a fright and a wetting.

THE wedding of Lady Helmsley and Mr. Hugh Owen took place recently in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Chelsea. There were not many people present, as the ceremony took place at the early hour of nine o'clock. The bride looked well in a dress of cream-coloured velvet over a petticoat of pale shrimp-coloured satin, with bonnet *en suite*. In her hand she carried a magnificent bouquet of lilies-of-the-valley. As is usual on the occasions of second marriages, there were no bridesmaids, but the bride was attended by her little daughter, the Honourable Mabel Duncombe, Lady Helen Vane Tempest, the Misses Muriel and Sibyl Chaplin, Viscount Helmsley, and Viscount Castlereagh. At the conclusion of the ceremony the bride and bridegroom drove to Victoria Railway Station, and left London by the ten o'clock train for Dover, *en route* for Paris, where they intend to spend their honeymoon.

The following is a description by a contemporary of the wedding-cake made to the order of Kentish ladies for Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice. It represents three cakes, one above the other, and the plateau upon which it rests, and surrounding the lower cake, is a wreath of lilies, white, interspersed with ivy, emblematic of purity, sweetness and friendship. Surrounding the lowest cake are large skeleton shields, bearing on enclosed shields the coat of arms of the Princess Beatrice and Prince Henry of Battenberg, interspersed with passion-flowers. Surrounding the second cake are jessamine, and round the second and third cakes are passion-flowers, ivy, and roses. On the top cakes are cupids and a large vase containing an immense bouquet, composed of a variety of emblematic flowers. The cake weighs about 4 cwt., and the floral decorations are all modelled of sugar. It will be placed on a massive gold stand, which is being specially made and designed for the occasion.

THE QUEEN OF PORTUGAL is supposed to be one of the best dressed women in all Europe, but the statement that she never wears a dress twice is not true. What is no doubt referred to are dresses worn on public occasions. This is in accordance with Court etiquette. It may not be generally known that the Queen of Portugal has all her morning-dresses made in London. A morning costume just finished for Her Majesty is in blue and brown, a plain skirt in brown brocade in a floral design, the outline of the pattern being in pale blue. Over the skirt is draped a pointed tunic of brown cloth, with black draperies of the same. The bodice of brown cloth is shaped somewhat like an officer's shell-jacket, with gilt buttons all round the edge. Where the jacket is cut away in front, a loose vest front of pale blue silk is revealed, a sach of the same being arranged like a scarf drapery passing under the basque of the jacket, behind, and tied in two loops.

STATISTICS.

EXPERIMENTS ON LIVING ANIMALS.—Inspector-general Bush reports that 49 persons held licenses during 1884, and the total number of experiments of all kinds performed was about 441. The animals operated upon were all rendered insensible during the experiments. Of 145 experiments, 99 consisted in simple inoculation with a morbid virus, in which no operation beyond the prick of a needle was required. Of the remaining 46 experiments under these certificates, 24 were performed for the purpose of medico-legal inquiries in cases of suspected poisoning, resulting in the death by tetanus of three frogs and six mice, which survived, however, only a few minutes; 10 other cases under the same head were experiments on the infection of fish with a species of fungus, very destructive in certain rivers and streams; and five on the effects of immersion of fish in distilled water, which proved fatal to about 30 minnows and sticklebacks.

GEMS.

It is the enjoying, and not merely the possessing, that makes us happy.

A WIDE-SPREADING, hopeful disposition is your only true umbrella in this vale of tears.

FAITH is letting down our nets into the untransparent deeps, not knowing what we shall take.

HE that hath a scrupulous conscience is like the horse that is not well weighed; he stares at every bird that flies out of the hedge.

IT is another's fault if he be ungrateful, but it is mine if I do not give. To find one thankful man I will oblige a great many that are not so.

NATURE, an enormous system, but in mass and in particle curiously available to the humblest need of the little creature that walks on the earth!

A TENDER conscience is an inestimable blessing; that is, a conscience not only quick to discern what is evil, but instantly to shun it, as the eyelid closes itself against a mote.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

ROAST LEG OF LAMB.—Let the fire be moderate, and roast the joint slowly, basting it frequently till done, when it should be sprinkled with salt, and the gravy freed from all fat before serving. Serve with mint sauce.

MINT SAUCE.—Chop as finely as possible a quantity of mint leaves, previously washed. Add to them sufficient white wine vinegar and water in equal parts to float them, and a small quantity of powdered sugar. Let the sauce stand for an hour before serving.

TO BROIL MACKEREL.—Cut them open, remove the head, take the backbone out. Dry the inside with a clean cloth, sprinkle it with flour, pepper, and salt. Grill the inside of the mackerel first. After turning it, while the back is exposed to the fire lay on the upper surface a few lumps of butter. As soon as done serve quickly. A little lemon juice squeezed over it is a great improvement.

UNINFLAMMABLE.—The following is given as a cheap mode of rendering fabrics unflammable: Four parts of borax and three parts of sulphate of magnesia are shaken up together just before being required. The mixture is then dissolved in from twenty to thirty parts of warm water. Into the resulting solution the articles to be protected from fire are immersed, and when they are thoroughly soaked they are wrung out and dried, preferably in the open air.

MISCELLANEOUS.

How brightly do little joys beam upon a soul which stands on a ground darkened by the clouds of sorrow; so do stars come forth from the empty sky, when we look up to them from a deep well.

AN EXTREMISED MARRIAGE.—The magnificent extravagance of the late Khedive is well exemplified in the small palace he built for the Empress Eugenie, and which has never been occupied since. Here, too, an instance of thorough Oriental arbitrariness occurred. The Empress, while thanking the Khedive for the magnificent reception he had given her, happened to say that the only thing she had not seen was an Arab marriage. "Indeed," said the Khedive, "this shall soon be remedied." So he sent for his A.D.C., gave him one of his Circassian slaves from the harem, presented him with a large dowry, and told the astonished official that everything was to be ready in two days. Accordingly, on the second day there was a grand marriage *a l'arabe*. The Empress was greatly pleased, and the A.D.C., a man far more European than Egyptian, and who spoke several European languages splendidly, found himself indissolubly attached to a Mahomedan wife, while all along it had been the dream of his life to marry a European lady, one educated like himself, and with whom he could associate. But he knew he dare not refuse, and so an accident settled his whole future life.

TABLE DECORATIONS.—Pale yellow and a delicate shade of blue are the favourite colours at present for table decoration, especially at luncheons and high teas, where the tablecloth, doilies, and floral decorations are all blue or yellow. Asters are much used at present for adorning the table, as are also gladioli and the smallest sunflowers. The former, in their various colours, are exceedingly pretty and effective. Ferns are also much used for table decoration. Many varieties are to be found in the woods in most parts of the country, and summer residents show their appreciation by gathering and using them in decorating their houses and tables. Summer is the best time of the year to gather and press ferns. It is a simple thing to do, and yet how few women there are who succeed in making them look satisfactory or fit for decorations. They should be simply very carefully put between the leaves of a book while damp. Every leaf of the fern should be gently spread out. Heavy weights should be placed on the book, and in a month they will be ready for use, looking almost as green as when gathered, and retaining their freshness in a remarkable degree.

THE CHINAMAN AND HIS COFFIN.—The idea of the Chinaman is that when he dies he ought to be buried in the trunk of a tree, and so it comes about that all coffins are designed with a view to keep up the illusion. They consist of four outside tree-boards, and are so fashioned together as to look very like a tree at a little distance. They are, of course, tremendously heavy, but then that is considered an excellent fault. If a son wishes to be very polite to his father, or one friend desires to obtain the good-will of another, he makes him a present of a good, solid, heavy coffin. The gift is put in an honoured place in the house, ready for use, and is shown for the admiration of any friend who may call. The owner would rather go into his coffin than part with it; and, generally speaking, though a Chinaman may get into debt and be very harshly treated by his creditors, they will leave his coffin, not wishing to prejudice his entry into the next world, which, according to the Celestials, depends very much upon the way in which a man is buried. We are told that half the Chinese living in Hong Kong are already in happy possession of their coffins, and ready to enter them when wanted.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

TOM H.—Friday, April 20, 1866.

DICK.—Very good writing and composition.

A. T. F.—Whiting and alcohol are excellent for cleaning silver spoons.

A. B. D.—Bi-carbonate of soda is a good corrective for a foul stomach.

G. R. T.—Very light brown, or what is generally known as blonde hair.

T. W. S.—The actress named was married in 1876, and divorced in 1884. Her age is not known to us.

B. W.—All parts of the plant called mandrake are poisonous, possessing narcotic properties similar to belladonna.

N. S. W.—To clean glass bottles, use a little pearlash and warm water, adding a spoonful or two of fresh staked lime if necessary.

W. B. H.—We have not the space to answer in detail all your numerous questions. The books named contain all the necessary information upon each and every subject.

L. F. G.—The possession of a dictionary, a grammar, and a book of etiquette would aid you very much. Without them you will find it difficult to maintain a proper correspondence with any intelligent person.

T. M. V.—To remove marking ink from linen, dip the garment in a solution of one ounce of cyanide of potassium in four ounces of water. In a few hours the name will be obliterated. After using the mixture throw it away, as it is highly poisonous.

A. F. N.—Do not permit your feelings to become too much engaged until this young man proposes. Do not let him know that you think so well of him. A young lady should always be wooed. A young man should be kept at a distance. We always desire most what is just out of reach.

L. S. P.—To make prepared chalk, rub one pound of chalk with sufficient water, added gradually, to make it a smooth cream; then stir this into a large quantity of water. After the coarser particles have settled decant the milky fluid into another vessel, and allow the chalk to settle. Decant the clear water, and dry the sediment.

C. N. C.—The difficulty of utterance rises from self-consciousness, and can be overcome only by habitually concentrating your attention upon the subject of conversation, and by restraining your thoughts from wandering to the person with whom you are talking and back to your own individuality.

W. B. W.—We advise you to let this young lady alone and not to place any obstacle in the way of her marriage, or endeavour in any way to divert her affection to yourself. Her old flame has long since died out and she probably looks upon you merely as a friend. You deceive yourself.

R. F. A.—We think that you are too young to engage yourself to marry anyone. You had better not engage yourself without the knowledge and consent of your parents. Your childish engagement is not binding, and you have acted very wisely in frankly telling your beau that it was not your desire to continue it. Do not enter into another until you are more serious.

S. W. W.—A simple mode of purifying water is the following: A tablespoonful of pulverised alum sprinkled into a hoghead of water (the water stirred at the same time) will, after a few hours, by precipitating to the bottom the impure particles, so purify it that it will be found to possess much of the freshness and clearness of the finest spring water. A pailful, containing four gallons, may be purified by a single teaspoonful of the alum.

C. T. H.—The first sleeping cars ever designed were used on the Cumberland Valley Railroad, between Harrisburgh and Chambersburgh, Pennsylvania, in the United States. They were built in the year 1838, and ran for several years. One end of the car was arranged in the ordinary way, with day seats; the other end was fitted up with eighteen sleeping berths for the night, which were changed for the day's running, so as to make omnibus seats on each side of the car. There were three lengths of berths, and three tiers on each side. The top tier of berths was hoisted on a hinge, and was secured by rope supports to the ceiling of the car. The middle tier consisted of the back of the omnibus seat, hinged, and supported in the same manner. The lower tier was the day seat along the side of the car.

C. R. B.—To prepare brewers' yeast, seventy-two pounds of unkilned malt and a handful of hops are gradually stirred in a clean tub containing seven gallons of water of 170 deg. Fahrenheit; and to this five and a half gallons of water of two hundred degrees are added. The tub is then covered tightly, and left quiet for one hour. Supposing this to be done at six p.m., the whole is left undisturbed until seven o'clock the next morning, when it must be cooled rapidly, which is done by setting it in cans filled with cold water. When the temperature of the mash has reached seventy degrees, the tub is covered again and left during the day until six p.m. At this time one and a half gallons of fresh beer yeast are to be stirred in. In twelve hours pierce a hole in the layer formed by the husks of the malt, and dip three and a half gallons of the liquid beneath; then stir the whole up, and dip one and three-fourths gallons from it (husks and liquor). This is the mother-barm, from which you can generate yeast

all the year round, in using it in the way described. Instead of the ordinary beer-leaven. To the remainder in the tub add five gallons of wort of ninety degrees, Fahr., and make use of it within two hours. The mother-yeast also must be used the same day for fermenting another portion.

GRACE F.—Master Sunday in 1864 fell on March 27; the following year on April 16.

W. B.—*Mex ami* (pronounced *menz ami*) is a French expression meaning "my friend."

C. M.—A lady, similar to the one you describe, could, without flattery, be called very pretty.

S. W. H.—We presume you refer to the bombardment of Vera Cruz, by the United States fleet, in conjunction with a land force, under General Scott. The fleet was commanded by Commodore Conner. Date, March, 1847, which would make it thirty-eight instead of thirty-six years ago.

S. M.—To make ginger beer, take one spoonful of ground ginger; one spoonful of cream of tartar; one pint of yeast; one pint of treacle, and six quarts of cold water. Mix, and let stand for a few hours, until it begins to ferment; then bottle and set in a cool place; in eight hours it will be good.

HOW I WOOL HILL.

All winter long I'd nursed a flame,
Yet kept it close and shady,
And held my peace at the caprice
Of a certain little lady;
But yesterday I marked, while she
Her garden-beds was viewing,
A wistful glance, a look askance,
That urged me to my wooing.

While o'er the freshened level plots
I saw her gently bending,
With parted lips, for the first time
From bulb and seed ascending;
Her face a little paler looked;
Her smile was less vivacious;
But all her ways—her air, her gaze—
Had grown more soft and gracious.

Then, as my step upon the walk
Betrayed my rash intrusion,
She quickly turned, her fair cheek burned
In beautiful confusion;
For something more than buds had claimed;
Her interest unabating—
I'd caught her bent, with shy intent,
Upon some sparrows mating.

"The birds," I said, "are making love,
Or their old loves renewing."
"Ah, yes!" sighed she, "this seems to be
The favorite time for wooing."
Then, as I tried to seize her hand,
And stammer forth my passion,
Across the lawn, like startled fawn,
She fled in frightened fashion.

But I had marked a smile and look
That thrilled my breast with rapture;
Swift as the wind, I sped behind,
And soon achieved her capture;
And then I read, as she no more
Repelled my soft advances,
The love that speaks in blushing cheeks
And interchanging glances.

Sweet is the lesson of the birds
When fondness is requited—
In one long kiss of perfect bliss
Our happy hearts were plighted;
And thus, while thence our footsteps chase
The pathways that were shady—
All said and done—was wooed and won
That charming little lady.

N. D. U.

N. R. T.—L. Rusty nail water will sometimes remove freckles of long standing without injury to the complexion. 2. A permanent ink for use with stamps or type is made of sulphate of manganese, two drams; lampblack, one dram; powdered loaf-sugar, four drams. Rub into paste with water.

LITTON.—The Act of Uniformity, passed in the licentious reign of Charles II., was a most infamous one, enjoining as it did uniformity in matters of religion, and requiring all ministers who desired to continue in the church, or be admitted to livings, to give their assent and consent to a new edition of the "Common Prayer Book" before many of them could possibly have seen it. Naturally, it caused the secession from the church of numbers of pious and conscientious men, some two thousand in all; and the glorious stand which they made in defence of Christian liberty should win our gratitude and respect, as it did much to convince that profligate age of the reality of religion and the regard that is due to the rights of conscience.

L. W. P.—Cape Horn was so named by a Dutch mariner named Schouten, who first rounded it. He was born at Hoorn, in North Holland, and called the cape that name in honour of his birth-place. The Cape of Good Hope was discovered in 1486 by Bartholomew Diaz, a noted Portuguese navigator, who, being unable to double it, and having encountered much bad weather in its vicinity, gave it the name of the "Cape of Tempesta." John II., King of Portugal, considering

this point as the goal of that gradual circumnavigation of the African continent which had so long engaged the attention of his countrymen, gave it, instead, the title it now bears. Vasco de Gama succeeded in doubling it Nov. 26, 1497, thus gaining the distinction of being the first European who by this route reached the Indian Ocean.

A. M.—Perhaps you have given your sister cause for her jealousy by acts of undue freedom with her husband.

L. D. S.—There is no reason why you should not invite this gentleman to come and see you with your parents' consent.

AMY.—Cochineal liquor is made by putting eight ounces of ground cochineal into a flask, and adding to it eight each of liquid ammonia and water. The mixture is then allowed to simmer for a few hours, when it is ready for use.

ROSE S.—The lady acted properly in refusing flowers sent her by a total stranger. When introduced to him in a legitimate manner, she would naturally treat him in a ladylike manner. Her future bearing towards him should be such as to admit of no familiarity.

TRM.—It would be better to take the satin to a first-class dyer and scouring establishment, where it will be recovered by those acquainted with the business, than to run the risk of ruining it by attempting to clean it yourself.

G. H. T. H.—Unless you have good reasons for not believing your husband's statement about absence from home at ten, don't worry yourself. Believe him implicitly until you have positive proof of his deceit, which fact, we earnestly hope, may never be proved.

R. W. J.—If you are a little more considerate the young gentleman will soon wish to be restored to favour. A young lady who is engaged owes it to her affianced not to do anything to cause him pain. All lovers are jealous.

S. S.—The best course with this young lady is to let her alone. Let her find out for herself whether she is so indifferent to you or not. You might show a little attention to some other young lady as a diversion. It might help the first to a conclusion. Act with more spirit, and show that you possess a little manly independence.

C. W. P.—This restlessness may arise from a little lack of variety. We advise you to invite some company and have pleasant social amusements and games. Do not neglect to cultivate an interest in the best literature and increase the number of interests in common with your wife. Happiness is largely the result of pleasurable employment at home as elsewhere.

S. T. P.—The young lady was annoyed by what her friend said, and then your pursuit made the matter still worse. It does not affect your standing with the young lady, and you should call upon her and bid her good-bye without any embarrassment. You acted like children, and at twenty you are still a boy. If you are going off to be absent for years, do not say anything about your love to the girl.

P. N. S.—In the West of England the fortunes of children are believed to be regulated by the day of the week on which they are born. This belief has given rise to the following lines:—

"Monday's child is fair in face;
Tuesday's child is full of grace;
Wednesday's child is full of woe;
Thursday's child has far to go;
Friday's child is loving and giving;
Saturday's child works hard for his living;
And a child that's born on Christmas Day
Is fair and wise, good and gay!"

LOTTIE.—A bunion is a swelling on the ball of the great toe, and is the result of pressure and irritation by friction of an exceedingly tight, or a very loose, shoe. Sometimes a sac is formed between the skin and bone, and the pressure of a shoe or boot causes the sac to inflame. This may go on until painful ulceration ensues, in which case an operation by a skilful surgeon is generally required. Rest, poulticing, and like remedies are generally sufficient to subdue a slight inflammatory attack, and wearing a shoe so constructed as to save the bunion from pressure will probably prevent a recurrence of painful symptoms.

THE LONDON READER, Post-free. Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eight-pence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 276, Now Ready, price Sixpence, post-free, Eightpence. Also Vol. XLIV., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

†† We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. R. Speck; and Printed by WOODS, ALL and KINGS, Milford Lane, Strand.